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THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

JUDE, a bondman of Jesus Christ, and ^bbrother of James, to the called ones, ^cbeloved in God the Father and ^apreserved in Jesus Christ: ^eMercy unto you and peace and love be multiplied.

a Lk. 6. 16.
Jno. 14. 22.
b Jas. 1. 1.
c Rom. 1. 7.
2 Thess. 2.
13.
d cf. 1 Pet.
1. 5.
cf. Jno. 10.
28.
e 2 Jno. 3.

NOTES.

WE have come now to what, apart from the epistles incorporated in the Book of Revelation,—of which we have to speak in connection with it,—is the closing epistle of the New Testament. It has all the character of this, a solemn one indeed, as speaking of the close of the Christian dispensation itself, which morally had already come. Already there were those who had crept in privily into the Christian profession, while they turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and denied the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Thus there were already the people marked out, of whom Enoch long before had prophesied, that the Lord would come with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon them. Their history is given here from beginning to end. “They have gone in the way of Cain,” (the way of natural unbelief, whatever the profession,) have given themselves up to the error of Balaam for reward, (the ecclesiastical departure,) and have perished (he speaks, no doubt, prophetically here, according to the style of the old prophets, seeing already before them that which, in fact, had not yet taken place)—“perished in the gainsaying of Korah.” This was the open resistance of divine authority in those who represented it: in Moses’ time, resistance to himself and Aaron; in the present time, resistance to Christ in the double character represented in these, of King and Priest. Jude thus speaks of apostasy; not, indeed, of the one great apostate, who is not manifested until the Day of the Lord is fully come, but that which leads on to this final form of it, when the Lord has taken the Church to Himself.

There is, no doubt, something intended, as always, in the name of him who writes the epistle—Jude or Judah, the name of the head of Israel’s royal tribe, and thus of the kingdom of Judah afterwards, from which comes the Jew, so called, now. The name has descended to us in the awful history of Judah (or Judas) Iscariot, the son of perdition, himself the representative of the nation in its denial of Christ, for which at the present time it is rejected. Judah is here, however, “the bondman of Jesus Christ,” as the nation yet will be in days to come; and it is as a Jew, a believing Jew, he seems to be a witness here of the second apostasy of the professing people of God, as he had been a witness also of the first. His mention of himself as the brother of James, or Jacob, connects him still more with those twelve tribes to which James addressed himself, by Jude no longer distinctly specified as such. The actual link is for the present broken, although the suggestion of it, as one may say, remains. How solemn indeed is such a connection here! To think of one who in his own lifetime could see for himself this double apostasy, man thus fully proved in his utter incompetency, all hope to be given up as to him, except in God!

Here, indeed, the hope remains only the more steadfast, from the deliverance from mere human hope. All that abides in God will of necessity abide; and so Jude writes here to the called ones, “beloved of God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” As called, they are preserved. God could not be unfaithful to His own call, or give up His purposes of love towards the objects of it. His salvation has all the full assurance of this: “Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.”

Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our ¹common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you, exhorting you to ²contend earnestly for the ³faith once for all delivered to the saints; for there are certain men ⁴crept in privily, they who of old were ⁵marked out beforehand to this condemnation, ungodly [persons], ⁶turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and ⁷denying our only Master* and Lord, Jesus Christ. But I would put you in remembrance, ye who ⁸once knew all things,† that the Lord having ⁹saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward ¹⁰destroyed them that believed not; and ¹¹angels who kept not their original state, but left their own habitation, he keepeth in ¹²eternal chains under darkness unto the ¹³judgment of the great day; even as ¹⁴Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, having given themselves over to fornication in like manner with these, and having gone after strange‡

f cf. Tit. 1.4.
cf. Acts 2.
39.
cf. Rom. 10.
12.
g cf. Eph. 6.
12.
cf. 1 Tim. 6.
12.
cf. Gal. 2. 5.
h cf. Gal. 1.
23.
i cf. Matt. 13.
25, 33.
cf. 2 Tim.
3. 6.
j 1 Pet. 2. 8.
k cf. Gal. 5.
13.
cf. 1 Pet. 2.
16.
l 2 Pet. 2. 1.
cf. Tit. 1.16.
m cf. Heb.
2. 1 with
Heb. 5. 12.
n cf. 1 Cor.
10. 1-11.
o Heb. 3.17-
19.
p 2 Pet. 2. 4.
q Matt. 8.29
with Rev.
20. 2. r cf. 1 Cor. 6. 3. s 2 Pet. 2. 6; Gen. 19. 24, 25.

* δεσπότης, literally, "despot." † R. V. and others render this clause, "though ye know all things once for all." ‡ Literally, "other."

20. 2. r cf. 1 Cor. 6. 3. s 2 Pet. 2. 6; Gen. 19. 24, 25.

He begins now by telling them that while his heart was busy with the subject of "the common salvation," and he was giving "all diligence" to write to them about this, he had to break off from it in order to exhort them to contend earnestly "for the faith once delivered to the saints," now in danger. "Once delivered" implies *once for all* delivered. There is to be no departure from this, no addition, even, which would alter its character. The faith is now complete; it is not simply that which the Lord spoke upon earth, but that which the Holy Spirit, according to His promise, has added as no less from Him. "I have many things," He said, "to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth: for He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Thus, those who would listen to the Lord's voice in the Gospels must of necessity listen to what He claims to be His voice afterward, as given through the apostles and prophets raised up and qualified by the Spirit, the witness of His full, accomplished work and the glory resultant. Already this was all being called in question. There were "certain men crept in privily, men who of old were marked out beforehand to this condemnation" (Jude evidently refers to the prophecy of Enoch which he cites afterwards), "ungodly persons, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying their only Master and Lord:" the grace they laid hold of, yet perverted to give liberty to their own lusts which broke out against the authority of the Lord of Him through whom alone grace could come to men. We have seen already in Peter and others this character of the last days declared. It was not mere error, the wandering of men's minds, but a spirit of rebellion, the complete refusal of authority by unsubject hearts. Jude puts them in remembrance, therefore, as those indeed who have once for all known all these things: "that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those that believed not;" and that "angels who kept not their right estate, but left their own habitation, He is keeping in eternal chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." Peter speaks of these as "the angels that sinned." Jude speaks of them as apostates having left their own habitation—left the place to which God had assigned them at the beginning. So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around, which imitated them in the unbounded lasciviousness of a corrupt life, had been made an example of, to put as it were before men's eyes the judgment which it naturally spoke of—a judg-

flesh, lie there as an example, undergoing the judgment of 'eternal fire. Yet in "like manner, these also in their dreamings defile the flesh and "despise lordship and rail against dignities. Yet "Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the "body of Moses, did not dare to bring a railing judgment against [him], but said, [The] "Lord rebuke thee. But these, whatever things they know not, they "rail against; and what they understand naturally, like creatures without reason, in these things they "corrupt themselves. Woe unto them, because they have gone in the "way of Cain, and given themselves up to the

10. *z* 2 Pet. 2. 12; *cf.* Matt. 12. 7. *a* ver. 8; *cf.* Rom. 1. 28. *b* Gen. 4. 3-8; 1 Jno. 3. 12; *chr.* Heb. 11. 4.

t cf. Matt. 25. 41.
cf. Lk. 16. 23, 24.
cf. Rev. 19. 20.
u cf. Rom. 1. 24 with
2 Tim. 3. 1-7.
v 2 Pet. 2. 10.
cf. Ex. 22. 28.
w Dan. 12. 1.
Rev. 12. 7.
x cf. Deut. 34. 6.
cf. Jno. 20. 12.
y Zech. 3. 2.
cf. Matt. 4.

ment of eternal fire. Thus had God already given needed witness of that which will manifest itself in a more awful manner in the time to come. Spite of it all, those of whom Jude speaks were recklessly following exactly in the same path. By their dreaming, as those that had lost the truth of God, justifying themselves in the imaginations of their own hearts, they defiled the flesh, despised lordship, and railed against dignities. He brings forward a remarkable example in witness against such railing, when even Michael the archangel, contending with the devil about the body of Moses, did not yet dare to bring a railing judgment against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee." Moses, as we know, died, and the Lord buried him, and no one knows of his sepulchre to this day. One can easily see, with the tendency to idolatry which was strong in Israel, why the sepulchre of their great deliverer might be hidden from them. Satan, as it would seem, would needs bring to light what God had hidden. Yet, even then Michael had not taken it upon himself to pronounce judgment upon him, but referred it to the Lord. This belongs, no doubt, to other testimonies, such as that of the Book of Job, which assure us that the judgment of Satan himself waits for that time when the great question of good and evil will find its final settlement. Satan in the meanwhile may come up amongst the angelic "sons of God," and put in his accusation on the plea of righteousness against the people of God. He still does this, and the patience of God goes on, using all this for blessing to His people themselves, and allowing things to work out to their necessary result without hastening them, as our impatience would so readily demand. We have seen in Job's case the end of the Lord, and that it was in His wisdom to suffer what would at last show how that He was indeed exceeding pitiful and of tender mercy. God has the sickle put in when the field is ripe, and not before; and when that time of ripeness shall arrive is known to Himself alone. It is far otherwise with those of whom Jude is speaking. They rail against things which they know nothing about, while in the things which they understand naturally they act like creatures without reason, corrupting themselves by means of it; for man cannot become as a beast without debasing himself far below the beast; and that which only testifies in the beast to the absence of a moral element, in man will testify to the presence of an immoral one. Jude gives the whole course of these apostates: first, "they have gone in the way of Cain." Cain had his own natural religion, knew God after his fashion, was a monotheist, not atheist, nor an infidel; would approach God after his own fashion in that which ignored what sin is before Him, and could bring the fruit of a sin-cursed earth, the labor of his hands, without acknowledgment of the sin which had wrought the curse, or of the work of his hands being defiled by it. It is the way of how many still who have no use for atonement, no faith in "a religion of blood," as they call it; who believe in the independent mercy of God, and in themselves also as being rather the victims of their own necessity than as the free, responsible agents, of which yet they speak. The ecclesiastical error

error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots* in your love-feasts, feasting together without fear, being their own shepherds;† clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom hath been reserved the blackness of darkness forever. And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied also as to these, saying, Behold the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of them of all their

* More literally perhaps, as most translate, "hidden rocks."
† Literally, "shepherding themselves."

21. 19. *κ* cf. Eph. 2. 1 with Jno. 15. 6. *l* Is. 57. 20. *m* ctr. Is. 40. 26. *c* Is. 14. 12. *n* 2 Pet. 2. 17; *c* Matt. 8. 12. *o* Gen. 5. 18, 21-24; *c* 2 Pet. 2. 5. *p* *c* Rev. 1. 7; Rev. 19. 11-16; *c* Deut. 33. 2; *c* Dan. 7. 9, 10. *q* cf. Matt. 25. 31, etc.

c 2 Pet. 2. 15. Num. 22. 12, etc.
c Rev. 2. 14.
d Num. 16. 1-3, 31-35. Ps. 106. 16, 17.
e 2 Pet. 2. 13. *f* ctr. Heb. 12. 28, 29.
g cf. Ezek. 34. 1-10. *c* Zech. 11. 15-17.
h 2 Pet. 2. 17. *i* Prov. 25. 14.
i cf. Eph. 4. 14.
j cf. Ps. 1. 4. *k* cf. Matt. 2. 2.

follows the natural one. They have given themselves up to the error of Balaam for reward. They can make merchandise of the things of God, owning the true God and becoming prophets of the truth also, in a certain sense, while their hearts are set on their own covetousness. This is the ecclesiastical evil which we shall see figuring so largely in the epistles to the churches in the Book of Revelation. Jude follows them all beyond this. They have "perished," he says, "in the gainsaying of Korah." This is, of course, prophetic. It is, in fact, the apostasy in which all will end. Individuals may have gone that length. No doubt many had in Jude's time. John thus speaks of many antichrists who have gone out from us, he says, but were not of us. These were but individual anticipations of the end, which we can see now so close at hand, of this whole class. It is only the ripe fruit of what has been their character all along. "They were not of us," says John. To have pretension to Christianity while it lasts only the more suits the enemy. Gone out, they would have left the body of Christians undefiled by their presence; remaining among them, they remained but to drag down all the rest, so far as it was possible to give, alas, an evil character to the profession of Christianity at large. As a fact, although individuals might have gone out, as a class they had not. There they were in the Christian love-feasts, "sunken rocks," as Jude calls them, ready to bring everything to shipwreck; "feasting together without fear" of rebuke, hardened by a seared conscience; being their own shepherds, with all the pretence and all the wilfulness of this, able to take care of themselves, to find their own pasture, if not to lead others also; "clouds without water," with a promise, not the performance, and yet with the threatening of storm—"carried along by winds; autumn trees," in the season of fruit, but without fruit; "twice dead," once in nature, then in the pretension of what was beyond nature; "plucked up by the roots," again looking on to what was their natural destination, those dead roots that had never taken hold of that from which faith draws, at last to be exposed for what they were; "wild waves of the sea," with the foam of their shame upon them, a lawless condition, boiling over at any check or rebuke; "wandering stars"—meteors which might be even brilliant for the moment, but suddenly going out, and gone forever, gone out into the blackness of darkness.

Jude multiplies metaphors to show us his horror of it all; and here already was that class of which Enoch had prophesied long since. So thoroughly had the Spirit of God anticipated the evil, and with so great a horror—the outbreak of man's will against all the light and love and truth of God, brought in for his deliverance. Enoch, "the seventh from Adam" was, as we know, himself the type of heavenly saints removed before the time of the great flood of judgment, closing himself the history of man in brief from the beginning; one who, walk-

works of ungodliness which they have wrought ungodlily, and of all the ^rhard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. These are ^smurmurers, complainers, ¹⁰walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh ^{Num. 14.2.}"swelling words, having men's ^{2 Pet. 2.10.}persons in admiration for the sake of advantage. But ye, beloved, ^{cf. Eph. 4.22.}"remember the words spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how they ^{u 2 Pet.2.18.}said unto you that at the end of the time there should be mockers walking after their own ungodly lusts. These are

r Ps. 94. 4.
Ps. 73. 8, 9.
s 1 Cor. 10.
10.
Num. 14.2.
2 Pet. 2.10.
cf. Eph. 4.
22.
u 2 Pet.2.18.
v cf. Jas.2.2.
3.
cf. Lev. 19.
15.
w 2 Pet. 3.2.
cf. 2 Thess.
2. 5.
x 2 Pet. 3.3.

ing with God, was able to see across the gulf of time that yet was to intervene between himself and that of which he spoke. As to these he prophesied: "Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of them of all their works of ungodliness which they have wrought ungodlily" (how he repeats these epithets in the intensity of his feeling with regard to them!), "and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." All other characters as it were are merged in this, that it is a revolt against God; at last a plain, open revolt, as we know it will be when the man of sin, the son of perdition, "exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped," putting himself in the very place of God, in defiance of Him. Never will man's will in this respect come out so manifestly as in those days when judgment smites it; and it is of God to permit it to come out—to take away the merciful restraint upon the evil in order to exhibit it in its full, awful form, before He sweeps it into the destruction that awaits it.

"The holy ones" of which Enoch speaks may be saints, or angels, or both of these, as in fact they will come together. It will be the sudden manifestation of the unholy and of the holy ones at once, and in opposition to one another. The "holy ones," misconceived and downtrodden for so long, will then be with the Holy One who is Lord of all. As they have been with Him in His longsuffering patience, so they will at last be with Him in the righteous display of His wrath upon the ungodly.

Jude returns to his description of them:—"These are murmurers, complainers." How certain a sign of those away from God, who either do not see His hand in things, or else fret against His hand; walking after their own lusts, they can do no other, for God is not with their lusts to prosper them; and if His mercy come in, it must be to thwart and disappoint them. These, as they have left God out of their thoughts, must have man in them, and thus those who are most independent of God, their mouth speaking in this way "great swelling words of false pretension," will have men's persons in admiration for the sake of their own advantage—slaves most of all, as they are, in that independence to which they pretend. Jude reminds those whom he is addressing that he is only in the line of the testimony of the apostles of Christ before him, who had never ceased to warn that at the end of time there would be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. Notice how the two things go together; their scoffing infidelity is but the outburst of the corruption lurking within them at the time of their most zealous profession; natural men, separating themselves, as unable really to mingle with the company of God's people. It does not seem as if he meant exactly any self-righteousness, for these are not Pharisees of whom he is speaking, but rather of the Sadducean order, and who walk apart, as having after all no common tastes or sympathies with the Lord's people, of whom nominally they are part; but they are natural men, "psychical," soul-led men, according to the meaning of the word which we have had elsewhere, men in whom the instinctive, appetitive soul is not governed by the Spirit—"not having the Spirit," says Jude; but he is not, as we might perhaps expect, speaking of the human spirit here, but the Spirit of God. In fact they are not Christians: "For if any man

they who ^yseparate [themselves], ^znatural [men], not having [the] Spirit. But ye, beloved, ^abuilding yourselves up on your most holy faith, ^bpraying in the Holy Spirit, ^ckeep yourselves in the love of God, ^dawaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Col. 2. 7; cf. 2 Pet. 3. 18. b cf. Rom. 8. 26, 27. c cf. Col. 2. 6; cf. Jno. 15. 9, 10. 20, 21; cf. 1 Thess. 1. 9, 10.

y cf. 1 Cor. 3. 3.
z cf. 1 Jno. 2. 19.
a cf. Phil. 3. 19.
b cf. 1 Cor. 3. 10-15.
d cf. Phil. 3.

have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." But then, this is connected also with the spirit of man being once more in its proper place as the intelligent governor of emotions, affections, and appetites. Only the gift of the Spirit of God really puts it back into this place, lost in the fall, but when now recovered is brought into a higher condition than at first, with the understanding of God and an aptness for communion with Him beyond anything that even unfallen Adam could have known.

Here, then, is the full tale told of these apostates, and this is what Christianity dispensationally is going on to—apostasy. Every dispensation has ended after this manner: before the flood, as it is itself witness to us; after the flood, when the world got away into idolatry and Abraham had to be called out of it to walk alone with God; then, Abraham's seed brought into a place of special favor with God, and enriched with a revelation from Him to deliver them from the tide of traditional evil, these, alas, in their captivity in Babylon, found the end of covenant, and were scattered amongst the Gentiles; a few being permitted to go back into their land to wait there for the Messiah to come,—in the manifest condition of those who had lost everything and must be indebted to divine grace in Him for all that they could know. Yet when He came, only to be rejected and crucified, to be given up into the hands of the Gentiles, His people choosing for themselves no other king than Cæsar, and receiving that recompense of their error that was meet. Now, alas, in the vision of the apostle here, the end of the last testimony committed to faith had already come, far off as it might yet be as to the final issue, in which Gentiles as well as Jews, partakers together of the most wonderful blessing, the wonder of eternity, were to prove themselves naturally as incapable, as hopeless as ever. Jude sees it; yet with stedfast eyes that see above and beyond it, God over all, and God at last having His own way, accomplishing His own blessed purposes, and faith foreseeing it can rest in the mean time, nourished by that which God has provided for it, "meat that endureth to eternal life." We have seen the same thing in the last epistle of the apostle of the Gentiles, in whom the joy of the overcomer breaks out while still in the battlefield—the joy of one who has "not received the spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." So Jude exhorts here that we should "build ourselves up on our most holy faith"—upon all that which God has revealed to us, and in which the power of the truth to sanctify will make itself known for those who really receive it. Notice that it is not merely a faith that is to be kept, but a faith on which the soul is more and more to find its upbuilding, its edification, far removed above all storms, and indeed a house of God, "the temple of the living God," those in whom the Spirit of God dwells.

Yet here, too, is the consciousness of weakness, the assurance of the need of Him who alone can suffice for it. Thus "praying in the Holy Spirit" goes with the building up; prayer, in its full and proper character, being the evidence of the Holy Spirit's advocacy in us—prayer which is, according to God, going beyond even natural knowledge, in groanings which cannot be uttered, but in which, nevertheless, God finds the mind of One who is greater than man. Thus we are to keep ourselves in the love of God, (in the assurance of it,) which, alas, tends to be weakened as we look upon a scene of ruin come in there where God at last seemed to have something for Himself, in that Church which Christ loved and for which He gave Himself, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it

And of some have compassion, making a ^edifference; but others save with fear, ^fsnatching them out of the fire, hating even the garment ^gspotted with the flesh.

Now to him that is ^hable to keep you from stumbling, and to set you ⁱblameless in the presence of his glory with ^jexceeding joy, to the only ^kGod our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be ^lglory, majesty, might, and authority, before the whole course [of time], and now, and to all the ages. Amen.

e cf. Rom. 14. 1-3.
f cf. Gen. 19. 15, 16.
g cf. Jas. 1. 27.
h cf. Rev. 3. 4.
i Heb. 7. 25.
j cf. Eph. 3. 20.
k Eph. 1. 4.
l 1 Pet. 4. 13.
cf. Lk. 15. 23.
k Tit. 2. 10.
l 1 Tim. 1. 17.

with the washing of water by the Word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

How different that which faith anticipates from that condition of things here, which one cannot but realize to be the fact! Yet the love of God abides, and will have its way, the mercy of Christ bringing us through to that eternal life in all its fulness, which has already begun in us, spite of our present weakness, and which no power of the enemy can extinguish, weak as it may seem to be. How clearly, as we realize what we are (men, naturally just what others are around us), does this mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ make itself fully felt! But thus we may abide upon our Rock of refuge, and may help some, too, out of the rising flood which is carrying off so many, "making a difference," as Jude says here—learning to distinguish conditions that even look very much alike and yet may be far removed from one another. "Of some having compassion; others saving with fear, snatching them out of the fire," in the nature of things just ready to kindle upon them, and with the hatred of the garments spotted with the flesh, which is but the necessary other side of love to God.

Jude closes with an ascription of praise—most appropriately in keeping with his name, "praise"—a praise how sweet and solemn as we stand amidst the wreck of all that can be wrecked, the shaking of all that can be shaken, with the confidence of those who know that God is able, nevertheless, to keep us from stumbling, and to set us blameless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Whose joy is that? Not simply our own, that "exceeding joy," although we share in it and it reflects itself in us; but the "exceeding joy" is the joy of the Father who has got back the lost, now found, the one dead, now alive again, and He makes the whole house ring with the music that is in His own heart first.

"To Him the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority from before the whole course of time and now unto all the ages!" In the sweep of all events from the beginning on into the future, which is manifestly in His hands entirely, He abides all through, the same; Master, as He must and should be; working throughout, according to the counsel of His own will, for the display of what He Himself is, that all may know Him. This is His true glory, that which He does not acquire from anything else, but which radiates from Himself, the shining out of what He is, for the full blessing of eternity, whatever the ages yet to come may discover of Him in their turn.

REVELATION: ITS SCOPE AND CHARACTER.

WE have come now to the closing book of Scripture, the fifth part of its fifth pentateuch. It is fitting that this fifth part should be just one book, and no more. It is a book of prophecy, and of prophecy which has, as the mind of the Spirit, a unity; and here we find, in fact, the unity of all the prophecies. The number 5, as we have often seen, is a 4 and 1. The 7, which is the perfect number, breaks in half, as one may say, in the middle. It is ordinarily, at least, a 4 and 3, the 4 being a 3 and 1;—the 3, the number of deity, comes first, as is evidently its right place. Then comes the 4, which speaks of weakness, the creature under the control of the Creator, but which, alas, may come under other control also. Here is its liability to fail, and 4 is, as we know, the number of testing, and of failure also. Still, God's purpose will be fulfilled in it; and the 3 and 1, of which it is composed, show in the meaning of its factors the manifestation of the Creator in it. From this 4, another series of 3 completes the 7. In these we have the creature in its relationship to the Creator. Thus 7 is a $3+1+3$. As such there can be nothing really to follow it. It is the number of completion—of perfection. We have, no doubt, an 8 also; but the 8 is in this way, as the first day of the new week, the beginning of a new series, and has its symbolic meaning from this. 5, therefore, is a 4 and 1, and is commonly divided in this way in Scripture. It is man or the creature with God, the weak with the strong. It is the number of Immanuel, in whom God and man are united forever; but it is the number, also, of man in responsibility to God—the number, therefore, of divine government as we find it eminently in this Book of Revelation, where, however, Immanuel, as the One who unites God and man, is the necessary thought everywhere.

A 5, as 4 and 1, is in this, also, a return to the beginning; and such it is here. God's first thoughts are also His last:—He holds to them. He is Himself the First and the Last, the living and unchanging One, who abides to carry out His purposes according to His own unchanging nature. Thus it is no wonder if, when we reach the end to which Revelation brings us, we find that we are once more contemplating the beginning. The beginning is now seen from the end; as, indeed, when we look closely into it, we find that the end was seen from the beginning. This, as we have already had before us, the six creative days distinctly show. Things are now seen more deeply, however, as the roll of the ages has worked them out in full. All is seen to be under the

control of God, and to be a revelation of Himself, who is thus telling all His heart out to His creatures.

Revelation is Genesis enlarged and glorified. As already said, the days of creation show us all under His hand; and thus the numbering of the days, which is in the eyes of mere science but the crudity of an infantile conception, requiring (always and for all things) God; while the part of science (so they tell us) is to put God as far as possible in the background, and do without Him upon every possible occasion. But, in fact, the order seen here, as it is seen in creation itself, is nothing but the assertion everywhere of the Mind in it throughout. Thus the numbering of Scripture is not a mere numbering. It is a *classification*. What would we do without classification in science? it should not be strange, then, if Scripture has its own. Everything is put into its place by it, and its relation marked.

When we look but a little deeper, we find that there is progress everywhere—in fact, an evolution. This word belongs to theology, and mindless science can never represent it aright. What is evolved must be *involved* first. It is but the unfolding of what was in germ in the beginning; and this kind of evolution all nature witnesses, as it is plainly found also in Scripture. Look at these days, in which light, the expanse, the dry land, successively prepare the scene, which is then to be filled with firmamental lights, with creatures of water and air, and then of earth. This is not, in strictness, a zoological classification, which nature has never followed in its development, and which it never follows in its display. Nature is not a dead museum, but a living whole; and scientific classification, with all its use, lacks largeness to take in the various and subtle interweaving of threads into one pattern, though it may well exhibit the different threads themselves.

Yet Scripture, in its own brief way, has a more thorough classification implied in it than mere science can suggest, inviting research, not taking away the need of it. We see the distinctness and the relationship of the different lines to one another as parts of one perfect whole, the last dependent on the first, yet so that the first without the last would be a mere abortion. Life thus takes up the inorganic dust to lift it into a higher sphere, and enable it to serve in nobler ways than it seems naturally destined for. Here is a first step of progress, which shows the manner of the whole—a creature that cannot lift itself up, but must *be* lifted, and is lifted only by the uniting of a higher nature with it. Here is, for a spiritual mind, a gospel already, Christ already, and not very dimly, foreshadowed. With the creation of the soul, (which is marked out as not a development, but a distinct creation—God *created* the living soul,) the organization itself is raised to a higher level. The vegetable functions remain, and are incorporated in the animal, but now, besides this, there are self-directing and instinctive powers which need to be and are provided in it; and thus we have what is now for the first

time called the "living creature." Life displays now its value in it. Finally, by a new creation, man crowns this ascending series, in whom all former elements are combined, but reach a higher development. In him there is the dust of the ground, organization, a soul-life, but all this informed by a spirit in which we find now the image of its Maker, able to look up to Him upon the one hand, and, upon the other, down upon the lower ranks of creature-hood in communion with the glorious Creator. Adam thus fittingly gives names to all. And in man, as the image of God, a spirit from the Spirit, what a prophecy is before us, (incompetent as any one might be to understand it yet,) of Him who was to be, in a brighter and incomparable way, the true Image of the invisible God in manhood; in whom manhood itself shall find a higher plane than that for which it seemed destined, and God be seen in His place as God, yet stooping down in infinite tenderness to lift up the creature to Himself. Here is the Scriptural, the divine evolution in its whole extent; and must we not see the end, in order to appreciate rightly the beginning?

Nor does this progress of the creature stand alone, but the whole creative days leading up to the first Adam, who is himself a "first-born among many brethren," is but a continuous prophecy of the steps which should lead on to a new creation and a better Adam, with the woman (formed out of Him, bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh, the type, according to the apostle, of the Church in its relationship to Christ) completing the picture.

Then we have the Paradise garden and the tree of life, which we meet again as thoughts in Revelation. Notice also how in Revelation the numbering of Genesis begins again: seals, trumpets, vials, all are numbered, as the six days were, though now in connection with trumpet-calls of judgment which declare the vain opposition of the creature to God's thoughts, now to be set aside. Man, with a darker power behind him, has seemed to have his way a long time; and at last, according to prophecy, will parade his complete triumph; but thus only we reach what each one of the six days has declared, that "the evening and the morning are the day." There is a night implied, into which the day which has just shown itself passes, and may seem lost, but only to put upon everything the stamp of resurrection, which is the stamp of God Himself, when, out of that death in which the power of the creature is finally set aside, God, acting from Himself and by Himself, declares afresh His omnipotent power, bringing forth new life and higher beauty out of the ruin of the old.

Thus the cycle of which the preacher speaks as illustrating the vanity stamped upon man's passing generations (Eccl. i.) has in it also a higher and more comforting lesson. We find it in this return of Genesis in Revelation. The cycle is no more a mere cycle. It does not, in fact, return unto itself. The revolving earth does not return unto itself.

The morning of the new day does, and yet does not, begin again the old one. The cycle is here a spiral rather than a proper circle; and we see this in the plant, the first living thing, as a law of its growth. God's ways do not bring us back again just to the beginning. He does not replace the ruined past. Always a brighter and better thing comes out of it. The new Adam is not the mere repetition of the old. The new Paradise is the Paradise of God, and not of man merely. The new tree of life is of another nature than that by which Adam was to be sustained in the beginning. The revolution of time brings us back so as to contemplate the old beginning, so as to show that it has not been forgotten. But we are now above it, not on the same plane; and thus we can discern how prophecy should spring out of history, the event being always, however, larger than the type, because God's law is always one of encouragement and progress—Adam in the primal Garden come back in a better.

Spite of the fall and ruin, God is always seen to be Master. The earth itself has a history of this kind written in its own bowels, the present rooting itself in the past, but above it. The future more than fulfils every promise of the past, and of necessity, therefore, all prophecy runs on to the complete fulfilment, intermediate fulfilments in the meanwhile showing that the first purpose abides, which the great end alone reveals in its perfection. Thus all prophecies run on towards the close. In a book like Revelation they must, therefore, all run together. The lines are not confused, but woven together in a perfect pattern, for which divine wisdom alone is competent. Thus we can understand that "no prophecy of Scripture is of its own interpretation." We must have for comparison the various lines, distinct as well as connected. We must not merge Israel and the Church, or forget even the purposes of God as to the earth, in higher and heavenly ones. The true revelation to interpret prophecy can only be found therefore, not in self-imagined canons, but by having before one the great promises of God, remembering how He challenges every thought of their undoing, especially with regard to Israel, His people (Jer. xxxi. 35, 36), and that, even as to the new heaven and the new earth (Isa. lxvi. 22). Thus, an interpretation of Revelation which practically, if not theoretically, leaves Israel out, cannot have the needed largeness, cannot give us the mind of God. The earth also needs to come into the field of view; and if science has in a mere godless way glorified matter, we shall find that God has overdone science in its own field, but in His own glorious manner.

THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION.

It is well known that there are three main schools into which current interpretations of Revelation fall, each by itself deficient in its narrowness of vision.

We have Preterism, which contemplates a fulfilment almost wholly

in the past; yet even this has a basis of truth in it, though as a whole it will satisfy no one who has worthy thoughts of inspiration.

Then we have Presentism, or Historicalism, giving large place to the Church, which Preterism does not, and in this way abundantly more satisfactory to the Christian apprehension of what Christ's Church is to Himself. Yet here Israel is, on the other hand, almost lost to view, large place as it surely has in all Old Testament prophecy. Here we find naturally a larger basis of truth, but still an incompetence to give us the whole of it.

Lastly, we have Futurism, which in its extreme form gives us nothing as to the present at all. Even the seven churches are looked at prophetically as future, and sometimes even Jewish. What the Lord Himself calls "things that are," are put, in fact, among the "things that shall be." The place of the Jew in prophecy, instead of being forgotten, has become so large as to cover nearly all the field. Incompetency is written upon this view from first to last.

From what has been said, and from the character of prophecy as a whole, it will be seen that we cannot adhere simply to any one of these views. We must find in some way a means of uniting them together, while we shall naturally find the importance of realizing the difference between the primary and secondary applications. We have seen already how these secondary applications are, more or less, fragmentary, imperfect anticipations of that which will alone give us the complete, satisfactory, final fulfilment. It is this alone which will stand all tests, which maintains inspiration at its full level, which has nowhere any apologies to make for failure. Here all discords end in the complete harmony.

Let us look first a little more closely at the schools that have been enumerated. Each has its strong points, which we must recognize. Preterism has these as the others have, worse than unsatisfying as it is, as a whole. Thus, if we look at what may seem a crucial point, it is able to resolve the number of the beast (Rev. xiii. 18) in a way which, if it stood alone, could not but be apparently most convincing. Thus, Farrar, who stands most boldly for this view throughout, can appeal to the singular fact that he can not only explain by it the name itself, but even the number, which in some copies replaces the common 666—616. The number of the name is, as every one is supposed to know, simply the number of the letters which compose it; letters standing for numbers both in the Greek and Hebrew alphabets. The beast is allowed on all hands to be the Roman empire, as identified with one of the seven heads which it carries in Revelation. "Beyond all shadow of doubt or uncertainty," says Farrar, "the wild beast from the sea is meant as a symbol of the emperor Nero. Here, at any rate, St. John has neglected no single means by which he could make his meaning clear without deadly peril to himself and the Christian Church."

He gives no less than seventeen marks: First, "It rises from the sea, by which," he says, "is perhaps indicated not only a western power, and therefore to a Jew a power beyond the sea, but perhaps especially one connected with the sea-washed peninsula of Italy."

Secondly, "It is a beast like one of Daniel's four beasts, but more portentous and formidable. . . . The beast is a symbol interchangeably of the Roman empire and of the emperor. In fact, to a greater degree than at any period of history, the two were one. Roman history had dwindled down into a personal drama. The Roman emperor could say with literal truth, '*L'Etat, c'est moi*,' and a wild beast was a Jew's natural symbol either for a pagan kingdom or for its autocrat. When St. Paul was delivered from Nero, or his representative, he says quite naturally that he was 'delivered out of the mouth of the lion.' . . . Lactantius speaks of Nero as a *tam mala bestia*."

Third. "This wild beast of heathen power has ten horns, which represent the ten named provinces of imperial Rome."

Fourth. "Each one of its heads has the name of blasphemy. Every one of the seven kings, however counted, had borne the (to Jewish ears) blasphemous surname of Augustus, (Sebastos, 'one to be adored,') had received apotheosis, and been spoken of as *divus* after his death, had been honored with statues adorned with divine attributes, had been saluted with divine titles, and in some instances had been absolutely worshiped, and that in his lifetime, with temples and flamens, especially in the Asiatic provinces."

Fifth. "Diadems are on the horns because the Roman pro-consuls, as delegates of the emperor, enjoy no little share of the Cæsarean autocracy and splendor, but

Sixth. "The name of blasphemy (for such is the true reading) is only on the *heads*, because the emperor alone receives divine honor, and alone bears the daring title of Augustus."

Seven. "One of the heads is wounded to death, but the deadly wound is healed. If there could be any doubt that this indicates the violent end and universally expected return of Nero, or, (which is the same thing for prophetic purposes,) of one like him, that doubt seems to be removed by the parallel description of the seventeenth chapter, where we are told that of the seven kings of the mystic Babylon—"

Eighth. "The five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come, and the beast that thou sawest was and is not, and is about to come out of the abyss. 'The beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven.' Can language be more apparently perplexing? Yet its solution is obvious. No explanation worthy the name has ever been offered of this enigma except that which makes it turn on the widespread expectation that Nero was either not dead, or that, even if dead, he would in some strange way return. Only two or three of the slaves and people of humble rank had seen his corpse. All of these, except

one or two soldiers and the single freedman of Galba, had been his humble adherents. It seemed inconceivable that after a hundred years of imperialism the last of the divine race of Cæsars should thus disappear like the foam upon the water. The five kings are Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius, and Nero. Since the seer is writing in the reign of Galba, the fifth king, Nero, was and is not. Otho, the seventh king, was not yet come. When he came, which could not be long delayed, for Galba was an old man, he was to reign for a short time, and then was to come the eighth, which it was expected would be Nero again, one of the previous seven, and so both the fifth and the eighth."

Farrar shows us afterwards how Domitian would serve the purpose of this revived head—"the bald Nero," as men called him.

Ninth. "'All the earth wondered after the beast.' The Roman Plebs had become 'sottish, licentious gamblers;' and one who was more gigantically sottish than themselves had become their ideal. The best comment on this particular may be found in the description of Tacitus of the manner in which all Rome, from its proudest senators down to its humblest artisans, poured forth along the public ways to receive with acclamations the guilty wretch who was returning from the Campaigna, with his hands red with his murdered mother's blood."

Tenth. "That the world worshiped the dragon who gave his power to the beast would be a natural Jewish way of indicating the belief that the pagan world, when it offered holocausts for its emperor, was adoring devils for deities."

Eleventh. "The cries of the world, 'Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?' sound like an echo of the shouts, 'Victories Olympic! victories Pythian! Nero the Hercules! Nero Apollo! Sacred One! the One of the Æon!'—that is, unparalleled in all the world!"

Twelfth. "The 'mouth speaking great things and blasphemies' is the mouth which was incessantly uttering the most monstrous boasts and pretensions, declaring that no one before himself had the least conception of what things an emperor might do, and of the lengths to which he could go: the mouth which ordered the erection of his own colossus 120 feet high, adorned with the insignia and attributes of the sun. As for his blasphemies, Suetonius tells us that he was an avowed and even contemptuous atheist."

Thirteenth. "'Power was given to him to act for forty-two months.' The simplest explanation is that it refers to the time which elapsed between the beginning of Nero's persecution in November, 64, and his death in June, 68, which is almost exactly three and a half years."

Fourteenth. "'It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them;' for it was he who began the terrible era of martyrdom and put a vast multitude to death with hideous tortures, on a false accusation."

Fifteenth. "‘Power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations.’ Of there presentatives of thew orld-powers in that day, Greece received him with frantic adulation. Parthia was in friendly relations with him, and Armenia, in the person of Tiridates, laid its diadem before his feet. Even Herod the Great, though himself a powerful king, had been accustomed to talk of ‘the almighty Romans.’”

Sixteenth. "‘All the inhabitants of the earth,’ except the followers of the Lamb, ‘worshipped him.’ This, as we have seen, was literally true of the emperors, both in their lifetime and after their death. At this dreadful period the cult of the emperor was almost the only sincere worship which still existed.”

The seventeenth mark is the number of the name. In the language of the New Testament, however, *Neron Kaisar* could not possibly make this number; but “the apostle was writing as a Hebrew, was evidently thinking as a Hebrew.” To give it in Hebrew “would render the cryptograph additionally secure against the prying inquisition of treacherous pagan informers. It would have been to the last degree perilous to make the secret too clear. Accordingly, the Jewish Christian would have tried the name as he thought of the name, that is, in Hebrew letters, and the moment that he did this the secret is revealed. No Jew ever thought of Nero except as *Neron Kesar*, and this gives at once 666.” “If any confirmation could possibly be wanting to this conclusion, we find it in the curious fact recorded by Irenæus that in some copies he found the reading 616. Now this change can hardly have been due to carelessness. . . . But if the above solution be correct, this simple variation is at once explained and accounted for. A Jewish Christian trying his Hebrew solution, which would, as he knew, defend the interpretation from dangerous Gentiles, may have been puzzled by the *n* in *Neron Kesar*. Although the name was written in Hebrew, he knew that to Roman Gentiles generally the name was always Nero Cæsar, not Neron; but Nero Kesar in Hebrew, omitting the final *n*, gave 616, not 666; and he may have altered the reading because he imagined that in an unimportant particular it made the solution more suitable and easy.”

All this has been quoted so much in full because it makes plain the strength, such as there is, in the arguments of the Preterist, and shows, indeed, in a most striking way the danger which the apostle Peter points out, of making the “prophecy of Scripture” of “private interpretation,” or, as the word means, “*its own* interpretation:” something capable of standing alone, of being interpreted by itself, apart from its general connection with prophecy elsewhere. Of course, as soon as Dr. Farrar gets away from his principal argument, and aims to take up the other prophecies even of Revelation in connection with it, his success is by no means so assured, and he feels it. The second beast, for instance, in the same chapter, the wild beast from the land, the false prophet who

works signs before the first beast,—with regard to it, we are assured that “all commentators alike, preterist, futurist, continuous-historical, allegorical, with all their subdivisions, have here been reduced to manifest perplexity, and have been forced to content themselves with explanations which do violence to one or more of the indications by which we must be guided.” Of course we must not expect, therefore, that his own solution of these problems is to be much more satisfactory than those of others. At the same time he attempts the solution, and in various ways, which clearly reveal his actual perplexity.

In the first place, you may take as a conjecture that “by this wild beast and false prophet is meant the Roman Augurial System.” He admits, however, a great difficulty. “It has been generally felt that the institution of prophets was not so prominent, even in Nero’s reign, as to admit of our applying it to the ten definite indications of the apocalyptic seer. False prophets were hardly in any sense a delegate and *alter-ego* of the emperor.” He finds, on the whole, more in favor of the view that this second beast is Simon Magus! He had been baptized, and that, of course, made him more like a lamb. Then there are legions of wonderful miracles on his part, one of which was his appearing clothed in flame. Moreover, he is expressly said to have made statues move, so that he may well have pretended to make them speak. If he attempted this at all, he is more likely to have applied it to the statue of the emperor, the image of the beast, than to any other. All that would have been needed was a little machinery and a little ventriloquism. It is puzzling, however, that “the pagan historians are silent about him and his doings; but the events themselves had no political significance, and lay outside their sphere”! That is to say, “exercising all the power of the first beast in his presence” has no political significance! However, there is a third conjecture, more probable than either of the former. Hildebrand’s suggestion is that by the false prophet, or the second beast from the land, is meant *Vespasian*. If the words be rendered “from the land,” they then apply to Judæa, and Vespasian as emperor went forth from Judæa. Of course that was after Nero, the first beast, was dead; but then, that makes no difference to Dr. Farrar. Then he had two horns, like a lamb, and Vespasian was of a remarkably mild character. His two horns are his two sons, who were both men of mark, and supported him—Titus, the conqueror of Judæa, and Domitian, who headed his party in Rome. How these two horns made him more like a lamb is a question for Dr. Farrar. He spake, though, as a dragon, or serpent; that is, being a pagan, he used the language of paganism, and had a serpentine wisdom about him besides. Then he was a visible delegate of Nero in Palestine, and he made the earth worship the first beast, because to enforce subjection to Nero was the express object of Vespasian’s mission against the Jews. It might seem an impossibility to suppose that he pretended to work signs, but in fact his

visit to Alexandria was accompanied by signs and wonders which obtained wide credence. He had anointed with spittle the eyes of a blind man and restored his sight, and before a full assembly he had healed a cripple. He had shown a remarkable example of second sight. Then, "as a *fulmen belli*, and as the supposed recipient of a favorable oracle from Elijah, Vespasian, in his brilliant success at the beginning of the Jewish war, might well be said, in the style of writing which constantly intermingles the symbolic and the literal, to have flashed fire from heaven upon the enemies of the beast."

His giving breath to the image of the beast may have been founded upon a rumor of something of the kind having taken place in Judæa; if not, the reanimation of the Roman power in Palestine is quite sufficient to meet the language of the seer. It is hardly worth while, one would say, to go through any more of this. Dr. Farrar's one doubt with regard to this application is whether St. John may not have meant to combine in his picture "the features observable in the position and conduct of Simon Magus, the false prophet who supported Nero at Rome, and of Josephus, the false prophet who embraced the cause of Vespasian in Palestine, with that of Vespasian himself as a two-horned wild beast maintaining the power of Rome in the Holy Land. The composite character of such a symbol presents no difficulty."

Naturally, when we come to the connection of the beast and false prophet in the awful battlefield of the nineteenth chapter, and their being cast alive together into the lake of fire at the appearing of the Lord from heaven, there can be no more even an attempt to show us how this could all be fulfilled in connection with these two emperors of far-back history. It is the private, or isolated, interpretation really of a small part of the prophecy which creates even the possibility of such suggestions as Dr. Farrar has given us. We shall have little or nothing to do with Preterism when we take up the interpretation of the book before us. It is, as a whole, simply a substitution of things which were a partial anticipation of the future for that future itself. Such anticipations we find oftentimes in prophecy, some figure near at hand which becomes a type of what is beyond and greater than itself; as that of Antiochus Epiphanes, for instance, in the Book of Daniel. To make these the whole fulfilment, it is necessary to destroy, as Dr. Farrar clearly aims to do, all faith in any exactness of prophecy whatever. It is for such writers rather a human presage of events sufficiently near for human ken, which, after all, may be largely also a mistake—the substitution of this for divine revelation; the human element, so called, in inspiration almost completely banishing the thought of the divine.

PRESENTISM.

In turning now to look at the historical interpretation, we find at once a manifest difference, and much that commends itself to the Chris-

tian heart. The Church, for instance, finds such a place in it as we might expect. It has, indeed, too large a place: and the connection with Jewish prophecy here almost disappears. Thus we have, in another direction, again a violation of the apostle's rule that no prophecy of Scripture is of isolated interpretation. Here Rome appears naturally in its professedly Christian character, not only in Babylon the Great, but also in the seven-headed and ten-horned beast, which is the papacy; a fulfilment for which the name *Lateinos* proffers once more its significant 666, the number of the name. It can appeal also to history for the witness of the 1260 years of its duration, though somewhat variously reckoned, now expiring. We need not enter upon it largely now, as we shall have to consider it more fully after taking up the book in detail; but as exact and full truth, everything depends for it upon that year-day system which furnishes us with these 1260 years themselves. They are the "time, times and a half," or "42 months," or "1260 days," which are found thus variously given in Revelation, and which are admittedly derived from the Book of Daniel. The fourth beast of Daniel's seventh chapter wears out "the saints of the Most High, and thinks to change times and laws, and they are given into his hand until a time and times and half a time." Judgment at the hands of the Son of Man, who comes in the clouds of heaven to execute it, and Himself to take the kingdom, ends the history of the beast both in Daniel and in Revelation. Thus it is certain that we have the same power, in fact, before us in each case. The "times" enumerated here are the same "times" in every instance of their enumeration. It is therefore most important to see how they are to be taken. If the 1260 days indeed stand for the corresponding number of years, then the application to the papacy must be taken as undoubted. No other figure that history can furnish can be substituted for this. If, on the other hand, they are simply 1260 days, (three years and a half, literally,) then, of course, they cannot measure the duration of the papacy at all. They *must* have reference to something else; and taken into connection with their close at the coming of the Lord, we may say with certainty that their fulfilment is still future. Futurism to this extent will have its undeniable justification. Is there, then, any positive way of settling this? If we will take again the apostle's rule, and seek to bring together the various passages in which these 1260 days are set before us, we shall surely be able to settle without a doubt what is alone their complete and adequate fulfilment. Now if we turn to the Book of Daniel, we find in the twelfth chapter the "time, times and a half" to be clearly reckoned from the continual offering being taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up. To this time there are added, in the eleventh verse, thirty more days, making 1290; and in the twelfth, forty-five days more, making 1335; but this in no wise affects the first period.

Turning back to the eleventh chapter, we find in the thirty-first verse

the profanation of the sanctuary (plainly the Jewish one), the taking away of the continual burnt offering, and the setting up of the abomination that maketh desolate. The 1260 days that follow this must of necessity cover, therefore, the details in the rest of the chapter. It is thought by many that the setting up of this abomination was by Antiochus Epiphanes in times long past. The apocryphal Book of Maccabees clearly asserts this, but we are in no wise, of course, bound to accept this interpretation. Clearly, in the eleventh chapter of Daniel, there is no other taking away of the offering, no other abomination set up than that which so many assign to Antiochus, who is, however, by some of the most careful interpreters considered only to be the foreshadow of the great enemy at the end. We cannot, and need not, enter upon this subject here. It is sufficient for us just now that the 1260 days date from the taking away of the daily Jewish offering and the setting up in its place of the abomination that maketh desolate. If we connect this with what we have had already from the seventh chapter, there is no difficulty whatever. The seventh chapter does not speak directly of any such supplanting of Jewish worship by idolatry as the eleventh chapter speaks of, but the thinking to change times and law, or "the law," as it should rather be, and these being given into the hands of the destroyer, who for the same time wears out the saints of the Most High, shows us a condition of things which is entirely in keeping with what is given us in the eleventh chapter. The two accounts are in most perfect harmony, and speak manifestly of the same thing.

Now if we turn to the ninth chapter, we have in it the great calendar of prophecy, Jewish prophecy, which will enable us to put things more distinctly in their place. Here we have the well known seventy weeks which are distinctly determined or decreed upon the people of Daniel and the Holy City, "to finish transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy." Thus the Jews are manifestly before us in all this. It is with their history, and no other, that we are concerned. Moreover, the end of the period is therefore "to finish transgression and to make" (for them) "an end of sins, . . . and to bring in everlasting righteousness." It is, moreover, "to seal up vision and prophecy," that is, to give them their complete accomplishment, and, as that which certifies the full in-coming of Israel's blessedness, to "anoint" that "most holy" place, which "the abomination that maketh desolate" has defiled. Here, then, is a complete, final date for all prophecy that has to do with Israel's restoration, or their preparation for it. At the end of this time Israel is restored. What, then, is the beginning of this seventy weeks? There is no necessity to think of actual chronology. That is not in our quest now. The date is given to the prophet himself as "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem."

Whether that was the commandment given by Cyrus, or whether it was an after commandment given by his successor Artaxerxes, has nothing to do with the question before us. The seventy weeks measure, in some way or another, the time from the incomplete restoration from the Babylonish captivity to the time of the complete one, when Israel will be, as already said, restored to the full favor of the Lord.

But we have further specification. From the commencement of this period to the Messiah, the Prince, there are seven weeks and threescore and two weeks—that is, sixty-nine weeks, of course, altogether. Then, “after *the* threescore and two weeks,” as it should read, (that is, after the whole sixty-nine,) Messiah shall be cut off, and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Yet at most only a week remains of this positively decreed and determined period, at the end of which Israel’s full blessing is to come. The weeks, it is not doubted by any, are weeks of years. There need be no discussion about that. When Messiah, the Prince, has come, sixty-nine of these weeks, or 483 years, are past therefore, and only seven years remain. Here is a difficulty which so many have stumbled over. How, then, could it be possible that seven years at the utmost after the cross of Christ there could be the fulfilment of all prophesied blessing for Israel and their reinstatement as the people of God fully in His favor? The difficulty has led many to suppose that since the whole period must in this way have been long ago accomplished, that which was to close it must have been the Cross itself; and that we must either leave out the distinct reference to Israel’s blessing, or we must interpret it (in a way unhappily so common) by putting Christians in the place of Israel, and making it an obscure prediction of the coming in of the blessings which we enjoy. Even so, this interpretation will not stand. It is plain that in this part of the prophecy the last week is, in fact, never mentioned. The sixty-nine weeks are ended, after which Messiah is cut off. There is no seventieth week at all that is spoken of here. There is no intimation even, in the prophecy, of the blessings that are to ensue, but the very opposite. Messiah is cut off “and has nothing,” as we may read it in the margin of our common Bibles, instead of “not for Himself,” as it is in the text. The Revised has it in the text “shall have nothing,” which is surely the sense. Literally, it is “there is nothing for Him.” Everything has, as it were, come to an end, in the mean time, by His death. In connection with Jewish history, and from the Jewish standpoint, that is as clear as daylight. It is perfectly clear that by the hands of those professedly His people Christ was cut off, and that as a consequence, instead of blessing nationally coming in for them, disaster and ruin followed, and must needs have followed. That is just what we have here—disaster, and nothing but disaster; the issue of which is that the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy

the city and the sanctuary—a thing long accomplished, as we know, and which no one doubts to refer to the overthrow of the city by Titus.

But thus in some way we are of necessity outside the limit of the seventy weeks already, if they are to be read in continuous connection with the sixty-nine; and the prophecy still goes on: and “even to the end shall be war,” as the Revised Version reads, “desolations are determined.” There is a long, indefinite time of sorrow, and nothing but sorrow, to the Jew; even to what is said to be “the end.” Thus, if the “end” is the end of the seventy weeks, (however we are to calculate this,) it brings us right to the very time of their blessing, and yet marks it as a time of continuous trouble and desolation.

Supposing, on the other hand, that we are entitled to take this “end” as the end somehow of the determined period of seventy weeks, we can read it in the light of other prophecy without the least perplexity. At the end of *this* time the blessing *must* come; but *how*, then, does the blessing come? From the seventh chapter, it is perfectly plain, it is *by the coming of the Son of Man from heaven*. Who cannot see that that is the complete putting away of all difficulty? If He comes to receive the kingdom, that reception of the kingdom on His part means, according to the concurrent testimony of the prophets, the blessing of Israel. His coming marks the end of the desolations, and the new consecration of His earthly people to Himself. But still, how then are we to reckon these seventy weeks? We must go on to the end of the chapter before we can answer that. It follows now: “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.” In the margin this is rightly altered to “a covenant.” There is no article. The Revised Version puts it: “He shall make a firm covenant with many for one week.” The question is, with whom is this covenant made, and who is the maker of it? If it were “*the* covenant,” then it might be naturally thought that it is the *divine* covenant with Israel, “the holy covenant,” as it is called in the eleventh chapter; and the maker of this can be no other than Messiah Himself; but how, then, for one week? Think of Messiah making a covenant with His people for one week! Surely that is a new perplexity. It is, however, referred by many to the Lord’s establishing the covenant, not, of course, with Israel, but the new covenant by His blood. Then, the blood of the new covenant was surely shed, so that there seems at first some authorization of such an interpretation. But how are we to say “for one week”? The new covenant, when made with any, is an eternal one. It cannot mean that the new covenant *lasts* a week; and if we say that the language refers rather to some special *publication* of the new covenant in the seven years following the Cross, (or less than seven if we have a mind to make it so,) then this neither really fulfils the word of the prophecy, nor can there be shown any distinct fulfilment of it in history either. What was there at the end of seven years, or half of seven years, after the Lord’s death, which brought

to an end this making (or publishing) of a covenant? It is plain that nothing whatever can be pointed out to fulfil what is certainly a main point in what we have here. For this one week cannot be doubted really, on any interpretation, to be the *last* week of the seventy, and that last week is a most important one. The end of it is not the end of the publication of a covenant, but it is in some way or other the fulness of blessing being brought in. How, then, can it be shown that there has been any fulfilment of the prophecy in this way, in any proper sense at all? If it were applied to the Gentiles and the preaching of the gospel amongst them, no date of this kind as to it can be established; but there are other details here which decisively confirm the impossibility of such an application.

The last week, the end of which is to bring in the blessing, is clearly divided into two parts. "He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even to the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Now here we have, as is evident, sacrifice and oblation ceasing,—the Jewish sacrifices, as all must allow. Thus we have what the eleventh chapter gives again, the profanation of the sanctuary and the taking away the daily offering. In place of it, "the abomination that maketh desolate" is set up; and here we find, accordingly, that "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate," this lasting until the consummation. That is surely until the end of the week "and that determined is poured upon the desolate." The words here clearly refer to the end of the seventy weeks, which have been said to be determined upon Daniel's people and his holy city. Now if it be said, as it has been said, that it is the Cross that makes the sacrifice and oblation to cease (as in some sense, confessedly, it has; it has taken the meaning out of them, substituting substance for the shadow, and thus bringing completely to an end the Jewish system), yet is there a possibility of saying that three years and a half after that, at the end of the last half week, the blessing comes? To *Israel* certainly it did not then come; and the abomination of desolation contemplates *Israel* surely, and can by no fair interpretation be made to apply in any connection with Christianity. The half week must be three years and a half, as the first half week was. You cannot make the one 1260 *days*, and the other 1260 *years*. That is absolutely impossible. What event, then, one may ask again, was there that happened just three years and a half after the cross of Christ which, to any plain understanding, can be supposed to close these seventy weeks of years and bring in the blessing for which all these seventy weeks were only preparing the way? The Cross it cannot be, for the Cross takes place three years and a half before the end. The whole attempt to make these things apply to the past is, in fact, a mere perversion of Scripture. One can say nothing else.

To the Jews this last half-week can in this way have no real application. What abomination among them was it for which the desolation followed for this short period? To speak of the destruction of the city by the Romans here is absolutely impossible; and that we have had already, in a gap of time which evidently comes into the midst of the seventy weeks themselves, and which deserves the most earnest attention if we would understand this whole matter.

Let us notice that in Jewish prophecy the whole Christian times are, in fact, a gap. As the Lord says of the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, in the thirteenth of Matthew, they are things that were "hidden" till that time, "from the foundation of the world." The Jewish prophecies, therefore, do not speak of these mysteries. They must in some way leave room for them, but speak of them directly they cannot. Now, apply this principle to what we have in the prophecy before us. Messiah is cut off after sixty-nine weeks of the seventy have elapsed, and then "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." There, it is plain, we have the destruction by the Romans, but that was in the year 70 of the Christian era. It carries us, therefore, completely beyond the seventy weeks themselves if taken continuously; but there is nothing about the last week or either of its halves here, and the prophecy goes on with a prospect of desolations beyond, "even to the end." What end? Now, let us notice the expression here: "The people of the prince that shall come." It does not say, the "*prince* that shall come shall destroy the city," (that might be intelligibly said of Titus,) but it is "the *people* of the prince" that do so; and "the prince that shall come" hardly seems to speak of one that shall come against the city. The *people* destroy the city, not the *prince*; but why, then, "the people of the prince"? The people were the Roman people, that is plain. The prince, therefore, must be a Roman prince; but according to the seventh chapter of Daniel the Roman Empire goes down to the end, to the coming of the Son of Man Himself; and in connection with the last days of this it is that we find, certainly, a prince whose career is very specially and significantly brought before us, terminating in judgment when the Son of Man appears. Thus, in this case, he is a *Roman* "prince that shall come," is he not? And in connection with him it is that we have that specification of time upon which we have been dwelling so much, a "time, times and a half," during which the times and the law are given into his hands, and which ends with his destruction. How perfectly it all fits with what we have here: "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." "To the end of the war desolations are determined." And then it is said, "He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week." The person antecedent to this "he" is clearly not Messiah the Prince, but "the prince that shall come" himself. Isolate the prophecy, make it of private interpretation, and you may make of it

almost anything that you will; but if you take it all together here, what other interpretation can we give than that we have here spoken of, of one who is to profane the sanctuary, take away the daily offering, and set up the abomination that maketh desolate? In this case, the causing sacrifice and oblation to cease does *not* refer to the Cross, but to a totally different event in the last days. If we read here, with Keil, not "the end thereof shall be with a flood," but "his end," the end of this prince, "shall be in *the* flood," then it is the history of the coming prince that is before us all through. It is he, then, that confirms a covenant with the many for one week. The specification of time is as simple here, as in connection with the Cross it is well nigh impossible to understand; but it is the same person who causes the sacrifice and oblation to cease, who sets up the abomination on account of which desolation comes. The desolation lasts for just three years and a half, is terminated by the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, and Israel's blessing follows immediately upon this. Every detail comes into honest daylight and plain view.

If we connect once more, now, with the book of Revelation itself, we find not only the reckoning of these times, but we find the connected events exactly in accordance with what is in Daniel. In the eleventh chapter the holy city is trodden under foot of the Gentiles forty and two months—the *half-week*. There are two witnesses that prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth—the *half-week again*. When they have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss makes war with them, and overcomes them, and kills them. The beast is confessedly the last beast of Daniel's four. It is the *Roman* beast.

In the twelfth chapter we have a woman who gives birth to a man-child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Any one would say that that must be Christ. There is no one person to whom is given a rule of this kind but Christ, though His saints may share it with Him. The child is caught up to God and to His throne. The woman, if the application is to Christ, can be only the Jewish nation. Nothing else is possible. Christ was not the offspring of the Church, not even of the Jewish Church, as is plain. As the apostle tells us in the ninth of Romans, and as is perfectly clear—of Israel Christ according to the flesh came. But if the woman is the Jewish nation, we are told that she flees into the wilderness from the face of the dragon to a place prepared of God, that she may be nourished there a thousand two hundred and threescore days—a *half-week*. It may be said that there is an immense gap of time between Christ's being caught up to heaven and Israel persecuted in the wilderness in the days just preceding the coming of the Lord. The answer should be plain—it is just such a gap as we have in the ninth of Daniel itself; when Messiah being cut off and having nothing, none of the promises in connection with Israel being fulfilled to Him

then, "the people of the prince that shall come" destroy the city and the sanctuary. It is the same gap of time in each place, and the last week, or half-week, of the seventy appears here suddenly at the end of that gap in exactly the same place in the two prophecies.

The dragon comes down from heaven to the earth, persecutes the woman, but cannot prevail against her; and the next thing we hear is of a beast coming up out of the sea, plainly the beast already spoken of and the last beast of Daniel, marked with its ten horns and its blasphemy, and this is the beast which is described further in the seventeenth chapter in connection with the woman there, and which in the nineteenth receives judgment along with the false prophet at the appearing of the Lord. How well the apostle has bidden us, "first of all," to understand this, "that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any isolated interpretation, because holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit!"

This week, then, in both its halves, as one would say (certainly in its last half), refers to a time still future, and it is the half-week of years specially referring to Israel and to the desolation to come upon her just before that coming. But now notice this, that if this time so carefully specified, this "time, times and a half," or "forty-two months," or "1260 days," as it is variously given, is connected with the seventy weeks at all, the doom of the year-day theory in any exact application to Daniel or to Revelation is settled once for all. Make these 1260 days 1260 years, and remember that this is only the *last half of the week* of Daniel's seventy, then you have to reckon the whole seventy after the same manner, and they amount in all to 176,400 years. Who will claim for the seventy weeks such a fulfilment? The only possible hope is, of course, in the ability to detach the one from the other; but they are welded together, one may say, by prophetic links which it will be found impossible to snap, and which will convict any one who does so of merely wresting the Scriptures.

But that does not mean, as it might easily be taken to mean, that there is no truth in the year-day theory at all. There may be truth, but it is not the exact and literal truth. As we have seen, there may be another application of these prophecies, and an application to Christian times, which is simply an anticipation of the exact fulfilment which is to come. There may be an analogical reckoning depending upon the analogy between the histories of Israel and the Church. Such an analogy there is, and Babylonish captivity and all will come in it. Nevertheless, the two are separate and distinct. To confound them together is to make it impossible to understand either clearly. To substitute one for the other is to make it impossible to apprehend prophecy aright.

In the historical interpretation of Revelation, Israel finds almost no place whatever. All the connection with Old Testament prophets is almost completely broken off. The whole book itself is made "of pri-

vate interpretation." The historical interpretation has a certain place and claims examination, but it is but a partial truth at best, which we must in no wise allow to take the place of that which is the full and exact one.

FUTURISM.

There remains, then, only what is called "Futurism," as it would seem, to be considered. But can this fill the whole field of Revelation? As has been said, it is now sought even to make the seven churches represent seven Jewish assemblies in the last day; so that the whole Book, as it were, leaps at once into the future. The system developed in this way gives no hostages at all to the present. It may seem to be safe from refutation; for you cannot test a prophecy of the future by a fulfilment of what itself must be future. This system ignores the division which the book itself makes: "things that are," to be distinguished from "things that shall be after these." In some sense, surely, the "things that are" must give us something for the present, and this, any proper examination of them ought to place beyond doubt. It is only in this way that we can understand aright the earnest exhortation to every one that hath an ear to hear, to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," and it is only in this way that we can understand the blessedness of those "who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written therein, because the time is at hand." In fact, this extreme futurist view has hardly any proper claim to be discussed. The examination which we have presently to make will assuredly show us that the present and the future both find ample place in the book of Revelation; that as to what is future itself, the present has most important relation to it, (in some sense governs it,) and here there is no anticipated leap into the future; there is no refusal by the interpretation of all reasonable tests, by history as well as in other ways. We shall find in it that the divine view is necessarily the largest possible view also; that Revelation connects itself with all the prophecies that have gone before, receiving at once help from them and throwing, also, the fullest light upon them; but this view can, therefore, not be given aright except upon a fuller induction of all the particulars.

CONNECTION WITH PROPHECY ELSEWHERE.

The great principle of the interpretation of the book, as has been said again and again, is just that which was announced by the apostle himself of the true interpretation of any prophecy. That which is new in it always reveals connection with what has gone before,—the prophecy of the New Testament with that of the Old, which, if it cannot anticipate it, yet leaves, as we have already seen, a manifest gap for it. The only preparation, therefore, for the examination of the book of Revelation is by seeking to have before us the general scope of the

prophecies elsewhere, with which what is added to them here must, of course, be in complete accordance. Let us now, then, briefly see what Scripture in this way presents to us, and we shall find Scripture confirming Scripture in such a way as to make it possible not only to read actual fulfilments of it which have taken place, but also to read in large measure what is future also. It is plain, on the one hand, we are not to expect that our view of this can ever be as absolutely complete as we might naturally desire. God does not intend that we should be able to make an exact history of the future, putting every detail of what He has given us in its place, so as to leave nothing further for the future itself to discover to us. It should be perfectly plain that this would not be according to His mind. But, on the other hand, this will not hinder us from a perfect knowledge, as we may say, of the great outlines, and such an apprehension of details themselves as will help us to apply the future to the present, which is a most important use of prophecy, too much overlooked. The future before the world is largely, alas, made up of judgment, although it is true that the judgment is for a blessing which lies beyond it, and which is as bright as God can make it. Yet the judgment is emphatically a judgment of the world as it is, a judgment in which the whole present fashion of it passes away; and how important that we should know *why* it should pass away, and now to apprehend the mind of God with regard to that which He is going to judge! In this way prophecy is of the most practical nature, and a grand help to real holiness; that is, to a separation from evil which necessarily is found in fellowship with Him. If there are things with which finally it will be seen that He cannot go on, then how clearly this must enter into our present estimate of them! And this will make clear much of the detail with regard to that which is plainly the theme of a large part of the book. If we are to get out of this mere historical details, as such, these may have little significance for us; but if we are to find in all, God's moral ways as the end will perfectly bring them out, then how great may be the importance of any detail whatever!

Let us, then, look back now, and seek to get a general outline of prophecy apart from the book of Revelation itself, so that as we enter upon it we may enter with this already as ascertained knowledge.

We have already considered the prophecy of the seventy weeks, and it will be hardly necessary to go into this again. It shows us, in the plainest way, how God is keeping Israel before Him, can never forget her, and that the time of final blessing is one in which that interest in His earthly people will be most manifestly shown. But the prophecy shows us also that in these determined times which have to do with Israel there is a gap of unreckoned time, which, while it does not bring Christianity into view, makes room for it. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman power, Christianity, as we know, had already started upon its career of blessing. Israel's times are uncounted then. Thus

it is that the final week is cut off from the rest of the seventy, and comes in the place it does in connection with events which are still future. This is in accordance with what the Lord said to His disciples after He was risen from the dead, when they asked Him, full of their hopes of blessing for their nation, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answers, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." But "times and seasons" there are in connection with Israel. Why should we not know them, then? Just because they are not being at present reckoned, and you can begin no reckoning of them until the time comes in which they shall once more be taken up. This last week of Daniel is in fact what the Lord calls, alike in the prophecy of the thirteenth of Matthew and in that of the twenty-fourth, "the end of the age." As we have already seen, it is the Jewish age of which He is speaking. It is the broken-off end of the seventy weeks, as the events connected with it show as plainly as possible.

The Lord had announced to His disciples the impending overthrow of the temple. They thereupon put two questions to Him, which in their minds were no doubt more closely connected than they might be in ours. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" As to the first question, which had reference to the destruction of the temple, we have nothing to do with it just now. The answer to it is found more fully given in the twenty-first chapter of Luke, in which the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place more than thirty-five years afterwards, is explicitly announced. In Matthew the Lord deals rather with the second question, where the disciples seem evidently to identify the coming of the Lord with "the end of the age," or "world," in our common version. Now, remembering Daniel, and that these were Jewish questioners, with at present no hopes beyond Jewish ones, yet owning Jesus as their Messiah, with no thought of the long interval which was to elapse before His still future coming, it is plain that the "age" of which they were speaking was that in which they were, the age of the law—of Judaism as it then was. Of any *Christian* dispensation they could have had no possible thought. The coming of which they spoke was doubtless that coming of the Son of Man of which Daniel had spoken. "The end of the age" for them was that preceding the age of Messiah, which in the Jews' mind was that which we now call millennial. From our own point of view, we naturally think of it as Christian; but the Lord was answering their thoughts, in which as yet Christianity, in the way we now speak of it, could not have been. For us, Judaism is gone forever; and it seems a strange thing to speak of any end before us of that bygone age; which, of course, must imply its revival in the meantime. Yet we have seen that Daniel shows us a week of special divine dealing with Judah and Jerusalem, cut off from the sixty-nine weeks

preceding by an unknown interval, in which Christianity has prevailed, as we know. But in the last week, as we find it in Daniel, the temple-services are again going on until their interruption by the head of the Gentile power. It is to this interruption the Lord refers, directly citing Daniel for it. "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judæa flee to the mountains; let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." In Luke we have the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans, and instead of any such scene as is here given, Jerusalem is compassed with armies. In this case the directions as to instant flight are omitted: they would be plainly out of place. No such rapid and immediate flight as is here spoken of was needed to escape the desolating hosts. It is merely said, therefore, "Let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." But here it is not an enemy outside, but one in the midst, idolatry in some form set up in the very temple itself. The saints are the objects of special enmity, and they must escape without delay. "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days; but pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." This is in full accordance with the inference that Jews, under the full rigor of Jewish law, are contemplated.

Now comes another reference to Daniel. In his last prophecy we find that "at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. xii. 1). In this case it is plain that it is the great day of Jewish deliverance which is contemplated, and the people are delivered out of a time of unequalled trouble. The Lord's words can apply to no other than this: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be; and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." The precise time of the tribulation is given by the Old Testament prophet, three years and a half, and we see by the Lord's words how impossible it is again to apply here a year-day theory, which would extend it to 1260 years. Certainly that would not be shortening the days; and a tribulation of such a character as is here spoken of could not surely be extended throughout such a period.

The Lord follows with the announcement of false Christs and false prophets, an addition to the Old Testament of the greatest significance, and which we shall find developed in prophecies that are to come before

us: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe him not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert! go not forth. Behold, He is in the secret chambers! believe it not. For, as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be; for wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." As in Daniel also, it is by this coming that the time of trouble is closed. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth (or land) mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

For our present purpose it will not be necessary to go further. The agreement with former prophecies is clear and conclusive. A latter-day remnant is seen here in Jerusalem, distinctly Jewish in character, yet who listen to Christ's words, and are owned of God; and "the end of the age," of which the disciples inquire, is identified with the broken-off last week of Daniel's seventy. The temple is once more owned as the holy place, although it is in the meanwhile defiled with idolatry; and this before the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. We ask ourselves necessarily, where, then, at such a time is Christianity? And what does the presence of a Jewish "age" just before the Lord's appearing imply as to the present Christian dispensation? To this, Scripture gives no uncertain answer. It shows us that what we call the Christian dispensation is over then; that the Church, Christ's body, is complete; and that all true Christians have been caught up to Christ and are then with Him; that the rest of the professing Church has been spued out of His mouth according to His threatening to Laodicea: that the Lord is now taking up again for blessing Israel and the earth; and we are again in the line of Old Testament prophecy, and going on to the fulfilment of Old Testament promises.

That these promises belong really to Israel, Paul's kindred according to the flesh, we have his unexceptionable witness, who was himself the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. ix. 4). But he warns earnestly the Gentile professing body that they stand only by faith; and if they abide not in the goodness of God which He has shown them, they will be cut off; while Israel abiding not in unbelief shall be grafted back again into her own olive tree. He tells us, also, that this receiving of them back shall be life from the dead to the nations of the world; that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, and that then all Israel—that is, the nation as a whole—shall

be saved. But he adds that while, as regards the gospel now going out, they are enemies—that is, treated by God as enemies—for our sakes, as touching the election, they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes; because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Rom. xi. 13–39). In this way the wonderful change which Matt. xxiv. exhibits is fully accounted for. The Jews and Judaism (not taking into account now the change which this will necessarily undergo) being once more owned, shows that the Christian gospel having now completed its full gathering of Gentiles, as designed by God, is going out no longer. Heaven in this sense is full, though we must make a certain exception which we shall by and by consider; but it is the gathering for earth and blessing upon the earth that are now commencing.

The Lord has spoken of false Christs and false prophets in connection with that time. Let us turn now to the apostle John's description of Antichrist, and see how this connects with such a statement. He warns us that already in his time there were many antichrists; already there was the character of the last time. He speaks of them as apostates issuing from the professing Church itself, but never really Christians, though among them (1 John ii. 18, 19); but he goes on to describe one special form, "*the liar*," "*the antichrist*," as his words really are. "Who is the liar," he asks, "but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" And then he adds: "He is the antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (verse 22). Here then are two forms of unbelief, which in this wicked one unite in one. The first is the symbol of the Jewish form, that denies that Jesus is the Christ. It is not denied that a Christ there was to be, but it is denied that Jesus is this. The full Christian belief is, not only that Jesus is the Christ, but that He is also the Son of the Father; and "Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father." Such a virtual denial, many, as we know, even of those called Christians, make now. These deny the Son, to make much of the Father; but that of which John speaks is a step beyond this; the full climax of unbelief in the great head of it is that he denieth both the Father and the Son. Thus it will be seen that *the antichrist* of whom the apostle is speaking denies Christianity altogether; but he owns Judaism; for the very denial that *Jesus* is the Christ implies, however, that some Christ there is; and this is what antichrist, when seen in full character, means—one who is not only against Christ, but who takes His place; and so the Lord speaks of false Christs. These, then, by profession would be Jews; and the last antichrist is here a Jew. How naturally he belongs, therefore, to a time when Christianity is gone from the earth, the revived Judaism in its old seat, and the nation are in expectation, as almost necessarily they would be, of the speedy fulfilment now of the promise of Messiah. When the Lord came in the flesh there was just such an expectation, and just such fruit of it in the appearance of false Christs; and the words in Matthew show that such a time there will be again,

only now with a peculiar power of deception which only the elect escape. Among these blasphemous pretenders is the full, prophetic antichrist.

This connects naturally with that other picture which we have seen the apostle put before the Thessalonians (2 Thess. ii. 1-12); and here we find what unites John and Matthew, connecting the developed evil of apostate Christendom with the revival of Judaism, which the Lord's own words foreshadow. Here we find a direct warning of an apostasy to come, issuing in the revelation of one who is spoken of as the "man of sin, the son of perdition,"—the title given elsewhere to Judas,—but one who, as it were, not only denies and betrays Christ, but who opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped. He sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. The end of this wicked one is that the Lord Jesus shall slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring him to naught by the manifestation of His coming. It is plain that we are in the same times as those spoken of in Daniel and in Matthew; and when we find one sitting in the temple of God who takes such a place, how can we forbear to think of that abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, which the Lord has called our attention to through Daniel? Naturally, as Christians, we think of the temple of God as the Christian Church; and the common interpretation of the man of sin is that he is the Pope. We are not obliged altogether to deny this; for we have seen already that prophecy has oftentimes such incomplete, anticipative fulfilments, which are only pledges and foreshadows of the full and exhaustive one which is to come; but popery has existed for too many centuries to allow it to be such a sign as the apostle is speaking of, of the "Day of the Lord," either come or at hand, while the prophecies which in every other way correspond with the present one so simply explain this, that the application should not be either difficult or doubtful. Here, then, is what, so far, the great body of prophecy, apart from Revelation, presents to us.

We are now ready to look, though very briefly yet, at the book of Revelation itself, to see how thoroughly in unison it is with what has gone before; that indeed it is no isolated prophecy, but that we have, in what is elsewhere revealed, the key put into our hand of a consistent interpretation of the book from first to last.

The connection of Daniel with the Revelation has been already spoken of, and it is acknowledged, and must be, by all. The first beast of the thirteenth chapter here is the last one of Daniel seventh; but an important thing, of which Revelation speaks in connection with it, and which confirms from another side what has been said of the gap of time in Old Testament prophecy, in which in the New Testament we find the Christian Church, is that the beast of Revelation has its period of non-existence, and then comes up again in greatly altered character, as from

the bottomless pit. He is "the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present" (chap. xvii. 8). We are not going to look closely into it now, but it is plain that if Daniel's last beast stands for the Roman Empire, then it has, in fact, in the mean time ceased to be. If it is found upon earth immediately before the Lord's appearing, then it must have come up again, as the book of Revelation represents. The beast in this form "practices" for forty and two months, that last half-week of Daniel so often spoken of, the time of the Jewish woman being nourished in the wilderness from the face of the serpent. Whether it is the time also of the prophesying of God's two witnesses clothed in sackcloth, whom the beast finally slays, is a question resulting from the fact that in the last future week there are, of course, *two* half-weeks, and we are not entitled as yet to say in which of these this testimony to Israel takes place. Either way the time of their testimony, a thousand two hundred and threescore days, is equally significant.

Before this vision, however, we find another—not preceding it in actual time, of course, but the contrary—"of a multitude out of all nations," (Gentiles, that is,) "who come out of the great tribulation" (chap. vii. 14); evidently that one which is spoken of in Daniel and in Matthew is the only one that could be (in view of what is said of it there) announced as the *great one*. In this part of Revelation, then, it should be amply clear that we are in the Jewish times of the last days. These are, in the language of Revelation itself, "things that shall be," after the "things that are" have come to an end. This gives two parts of Revelation, which we may call, therefore, the presentist and the futurist; and when we consider the present things as they are pictured to us in the book, we find, without any need for doubt at all, that we have before us Christian times, the times of the Church of God on earth.

From what we have seen already, the visions of the second half of the book plainly declare that, when this part of Revelation has its fulfilment, the Christian dispensation will have passed away, Christians will be forever with the Lord, and the earthly people will be again those owned of Him, whatever the sorrows they may have yet to pass through before their full blessing comes. Yet, the appearing of the Lord in the clouds of heaven we only reach in the nineteenth chapter; but "then," says the apostle (Col. iii. 4), "we shall appear with Him in glory." To appear with Him then, we must have been taken from the earth before; and thus the same apostle writes to the Thessalonians that "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord." Here is how, as the apostle says, "those that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." There is no promiscuous resurrection when the Lord appears in glory. There is no picking out by

judgment of sheep from goats, such as the twenty-fifth of Matthew teaches will take place when the Son of Man is come in His glory and sits on the throne of His glory. Here, on the contrary, we find but one company of raised and glorified saints, caught up to meet Him and be with Him. Scripture is clear as to this blessed fact, which in itself affirms and emphasizes the gospel assurance that those who hear Christ's word, and believe on Him who sent Him, shall not come into judgment (John v. 24). This assurance, by such an expansion of it, is made clear enough. From this view, no one would understand that between the gathering up of the saints to meet the Lord and His appearing with them in glory there was to be an interval of months and years of earthly history; nor can one be blamed for being slow to assent to such a statement as this. Yet it can be perfectly well established from Scripture, although there is no single text which states it, and here is the place to give this some final consideration.

We have seen elsewhere that as the Old Testament ends with the promise of the Sun of Righteousness, so the New Testament ends with that of the Morning Star. Christ Himself is both; and in both His coming is intimated, but, as is plain, in very different connections. The sun brings the day for the earth, floods the whole of it with light, and this is in suited connection with the blessing of an earthly people whose are the Old Testament promises. The morning star heralds the day, but it does not bring it. It rises when the earth is still dark, shining, as it were, for heaven alone. It is to saints of the present time that the Lord says, as to the overcomers in Thyatira, "I will give him the Morning Star." This speaks of our being with Christ before the blessing for the earth comes. In the promise to Philadelphia also we find the assurance, "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here is a universal hour of trial, out of which some saints, at least, are to be kept. They are not to be kept *through* the temptation, but kept out of the *hour* of it—out of the very time in which it takes place. This hour of temptation we need have no hesitation in taking as that time of great tribulation which has been already before us. How simply the apostle's assurance of all the saints of the present and the past being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, so as to be with Him when He appears in glory, declares to us how Christians are to be kept out of this time! The hour of trial, then, that of the great tribulation, follows the removal of Christians from the earth. Thus it is simply intelligible how in those pictures of the world's trial which we have had before us we have had no trace of the presence of Christians. All, as we have seen, speak of Jews and Judaism as once more recognized, a thing inconsistent with the existence of Christians and Christianity at the same time; for as long as the present gospel goes out, they are "enemies for your sakes." So, also,

the antichristian snare, as spoken of in Matthew, shows the same thing. Christ is looked for in the desert, or in the secret chambers; as appearing, not from heaven, but in the midst of the people; and the false Christ, when he comes to sit with divine honors in the temple of God, does not come from heaven, or assume this. Explicitly it is stated also, in Isa. lx., that when the Lord arises upon Israel, and His glory is seen upon them, "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples"—a thing impossible if Christianity existed at the same time, yet perfectly plain in connection with what we have been looking at. Indeed, the difficulty with such passages has been to realize the fact of such a darkness as possibly succeeding the present day of gospel light. Again, the important scene in Matt. xxv., so misconceived by most interpreters even now, and for centuries taken as a picture of "the general judgment," becomes thus perfectly intelligible, as it is only consistent with this view. It is not the judgment of the dead before the Great White Throne, as in Rev. xx., which is post-millennial. It has nothing to do with those who, as we have seen, are caught up to meet the Lord in the air; no "goats" can be caught up in that way. It is the judgment of the living upon earth, after the Lord has come and set up His throne here. There is no hint, in fact, of resurrection at all; and if the Lord caught up the saints to meet Him in the air, as we see in Thessalonians, and then immediately came on to the judgment of the earth, there could be no "sheep" then upon earth to put upon His right hand. Universal judgment alone could follow. The fact of an interval between these two, such as we have been considering, at once clears the whole difficulty.

But now let us look at the two parts of Revelation—that of the present, or "the things that are," and that of the future, or "the things that shall be after these," as we find them outlined in the early chapters. The first part, it is plain, is that of addresses to seven assemblies in Asia. It is preceded by the vision of the Lord Himself in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, or lamp-stands. The seven golden lamp-stands are the seven assemblies. The Lord's attention is, so to speak, confined to these. He is surveying them, and in the addresses which follow He tells them the result of His survey. The seven lamp-stands, with this complete number stamped upon them, are surely significant. They are the representatives of the professing Church as a whole, God's light for the earth in the mean time, now that the One who was Himself the Light of the world has been taken from it, and it is night in consequence.

The addresses themselves give us—but we cannot yet look properly at this—the history of the Church upon earth from the apostle's days till the Lord comes again. It is not put, indeed, directly as a prophecy of this, just because we are always to "be as men that wait for their Lord," and it would not be consistent with this that the long period of Church history should be given to us, which would make unintelligible

any watching for Him in the mean time, until the end should be in plain view.

To each address every one that has ears to hear is summoned to pay attention. There is no such urgent exhortation in connection with any other part of Scripture. How clearly there must be for all of us, then, that which is of the most intense interest—things which, as is said in the first chapter, “blessed are those who keep.” In this way they remain, of course, with a most perfect value for every generation of Christians from that day to this. Wherever the characters of any of these churches appear, there the Lord’s voice of warning or encouragement, or both, is to be heard and listened to. This could be without realizing them to be, in fact, a history of successive stages of the Church during the time of the Lord’s absence. On the other hand, when it begins to be clear, by the fulfilment itself, that they *are* this, then what an encouraging admonition for us all that the Lord is at hand! Notice also how, as we draw towards the close, the coming of the Lord is more and more pressed upon us. To Thyatira already is it said, “That which ye have already hold fast till I come.” And the promise of the sharing with the Lord in the authority over the nations, Christ’s rule with a rod of iron, is connected with the promise, “I will give him the Morning Star.” This is the first time, midway in these epistles, that the coming of the Lord is spoken of. But now, in the address to Sardis, where there is a name to live, but actual death, they are warned, “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” To Philadelphia the voice of glad encouragement, and yet of warning, is, “I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.” Finally, to Laodicea, lukewarm now, nauseous as that to the Lord, who stands outside still knocking, but with little encouragement, the word is, “I will spue thee out of My mouth;” while, indeed, “to him that overcometh” there is another: “I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.” Thus the warning is intensified as the end draws near. Finally the Voice ceases; what the Spirit saith to the churches is completed; and then—“*After these things*, I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven;” and the first voice that is heard, as of a trumpet speaking, is saying, “Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must be after these.” Here, then, is where the “things after these” begin. We have no more candlesticks, and One who stands among them, and addresses them. The apostle is caught up in the Spirit to heaven, and there what does he see? Not only the throne of God, but thrones around the throne, and upon the thrones four and twenty elders clothed in white garments, and on their heads crowns of gold.

In the fifth chapter the Lamb comes forward to take the book out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne; and immediately we find

these four and twenty elders falling down before Him, singing a new song: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast purchased unto God with Thy blood of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign upon the earth." Here is a song of redemption, and it is a song in the elders' mouths, a song which does not, however, contemplate *all* the redeemed, but only those who shall "reign upon the earth;" that is, the saints of the first resurrection (Rev. xx. 4-6).

The comparative vagueness of the text here, now recognized by the editors of the Greek Testament, has given rise to a doubt on the part of some whether the elders here are celebrating their own redemption or that of others; but it is plain that it is the redemption of the heavenly saints that they are speaking of, and these elders are clearly not angels, but men—glorified men, not spirits, but already upon their thrones around the throne of God. All is in keeping with the surroundings throughout; the apostle himself being caught up to heaven, as the representative of those who are in "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," being the fitting introduction to a vision of glorified saints there. These elders are found in their place throughout the rest of the book. They interpret in the seventh chapter as to the white-robed multitude. They worship again when the seventh trumpet sounds. In their presence the new song is sung which the 144,000 alone can learn; and when Babylon the Great is judged, they fall down once more before the Throne, saying, "Amen, Halleluia." It is not till after this that the Lord appears. Thus the elders are an abiding reality all through this long reach of prophecy. We must accept the fact of glorified saints enthroned around the throne of God from the commencement of the "things which shall be." With this many other things are implied of necessity—the descent of the Lord into the air; the resurrection of the dead and change of the living saints; the rejection of the rest of the professing Church, now merely professing, soon to cast off the profession; the close of the Christian dispensation. All this we have already found in Scripture to take place before "the end of the [Jewish] age"—the last week of Daniel's seventy. The internal evidence harmonizes completely with what is derived from the general consent of prophecy in proving to what point in the dispensations we have here arrived.

There is another noteworthy change which we find has taken place. If "the Lamb" takes the book to open the seals of it, "the Lamb" is yet "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and in that character comes forward to do so. It should be plain what "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" means—that it is the King of the Jews, in fact, that is before us. Christ is taking up the earth now, and therefore Israel. This answers to what we find as to the character of the throne itself as seen here. It is a throne of judgment from which thunders and lightnings break out, but

these are encircled by the brightness of the bow of promise, the clear light shining through and in the darkness of the storm, and which is the token of God's covenant with the earth, as He declares to Noah. *It is Israel and the earth, therefore, that are to be before us in that which follows,* and the tokens of this that we find actually have been already before us. The 144,000 sealed out of all the tribes of Israel, distinguished from the multitude out of all nations who stand before the throne with their palms of victory as having come out of the great tribulation—these show us where we have arrived. It is no more the Church on earth, that Church which is neither Jew nor Gentile, but consisting of both brought together into a new relationship as the body of Christ. The old distinction, on the other hand, now prevails again; and in the fourteenth chapter we see these 144,000 *upon Mount Zion*, the seat of Jewish royalty, with the Lamb. The last week of Daniel in one or other or both its halves is brought before us again and again, until at last the marriage of the Lamb is seen in heaven, and then from these opened heavens the armies of the saints, clad in the robes of righteousness which belong to such, follow the white-horsed Rider out of heaven, to the judgment of the beast and false prophet upon the earth.

There are details here and there which may naturally still raise questions, but the general import of all this is surely not to be mistaken. Let us notice only, in conclusion, that when the saints of the first resurrection are seen to live and reign with Christ the 1000 years, these are really two companies, not one, as so commonly thought. There are those who are seen, first of all, sitting upon thrones, and judgment given to them. To these a special company is added who are distinctly *martyrs under the beast*. These together complete this resurrection-company. Thus we can understand how it is that we find glorified saints in heaven in the fourth and fifth chapters, and the marriage of the Lamb taking place in heaven before the Lord appears, while it is only in connection with this that we find the martyrs under the beast now taking their place with those raised and glorified before them. All is absolutely self-consistent, a consistency which belongs only to the truth.

This, then, in the briefest outline, is the character of the book of Revelation. We find in it the present Church-period, and the future also after the Church is removed to heaven,—when Israel becomes the special object of divine interest, the blessing of the earth being at hand in her blessing. This is not *a* fulfilment of the prophecies before us, but *the* fulfilment, while it leaves ample room to allow of anticipative, partial fulfilments also. Nero Cæsar himself, and still more the papacy, may have their place in such, and we may gather instruction from all these, but the first necessity is evidently that we should know what that fulfilment is which is alone complete, and which it is evident will test all other applications. They must be in harmony with this, or be set aside.

There is one point here, however, which deserves to be noted before we go on to consider the book in detail. The question may be asked how we can account for the great proportionate space occupied by what represents so little time in actual occurrence. Seven years, at the most, seem to elapse between the taking up of the saints of the present and the past, and the coming of the Lord to the judgment of the earth. Yet these seven years in this way are made to fill thirteen chapters out of twenty-two. Does this seem a proportion such as we could expect? or what can be the reason of it? Reason it must have if it be of God, and a reason which is moral and spiritual also. Why, then, should these seven years fill so large a place in what is distinctly the Christian book of prophecy? Now a question may be made on the other side which in part will help to answer this. Why is it that those seven years actually fill so many, many pages of *Old Testament* prophecy? It is plain that every part of this, almost without exception, looks on to the end that we have here, to the great judgment of the earth and of man by God, which must of necessity precede the blessing; for, as Isaiah says, "Let favor (that is, grace) be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn uprightness," a thing, alas, how solemnly proved during all these centuries of gospel witness upon the earth! On the other hand, "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Thus judgment, now perverted from it, must return to righteousness. The shepherd's rod must become a rod of iron, shattering the nations as a potter's vessel. The true Melchisedec must be first of all,—as the apostle has pointed out to us,—according to His name, the King of Righteousness, and after that, according to His title, King of Salem, that is, King of Peace. But this judgment of the earth and man, of which, indeed, we may have made very little, how much is there for us implied in it! It is the Day of the Lord upon all the pride and all the evil of man. It is the day which will bring down into the dust all man's pretension, and which will exalt the Lord alone. And we who are waiting to be with Christ in that day, we are those who are in a special manner being exercised in conscience, amid the strife of good and evil everywhere going on, that we may have "by reason of use our senses exercised to discern both good and evil." We are those who are to be assessors with the Judge—who are to reign with Him over this very scene. We are training for it in this very strife through which we pass, and the echo of which we find within ourselves also—a struggle between the flesh, the evil principle which still remains even in the Christian, and that which is in him as begotten of God. We are learning, in this, how to be with God in His judgment of evil. We are learning the awful reality of evil in itself, in having personally to do with it after this manner. And all around us there is that which testifies as to the significance of sin; a scene which will find its perfect revelation, however, only when the Lord Himself is revealed, and when everything

is brought into judgment. Is it not clear, in this way, what the meaning is of just those last seven years in which evil is permitted at last to display itself (the restraint upon it being removed) as it has never displayed itself before—the answer of man to God, alas, after all that God in His grace has done for him, and when the corruption of the best thing has indeed issued in the worst corruption! How important for ourselves now, that we should see what, in measure hidden for the present, is thus revealed in the event—that we should be able to see the true character of things upon which the judgment of God is coming, and thus be prepared also to be associates in the Day of His appearing with Him who comes to judge! We may grant that all this is little thought of, and that here again, as in so many cases, the wonderful provision that God has made for us has been lightly esteemed. Our own distinctive blessing, what grace has done for us (which we cannot, indeed, prize too highly), has, nevertheless, been made to take more than its due place with us; for God plainly has purposes beyond the Church itself—purposes which, in their fulfilment, will be seen to glorify Him: that is, to be needed for the full revelation of His own character. He would have us witnesses of His righteousness, as well as witnesses of His grace. He would have us enter into His counsels as to man in their widest reach; for we are those of whom the Lord Himself has said, “I call you not servants, but I have called you friends; for whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you” (John xv. 15). It is astonishing, if anything in ourselves can yet astonish us, how little we have learnt to value this inestimable blessedness; and how, in making self, or let us say even Christianity, the whole thing everywhere, and seeking to see nothing else, we have missed, and been content to miss, the largeness of the Lord’s mind. Nevertheless, “we have the mind of Christ.” We are the very members of His body, those in whom the expression of that mind is to be seen, not only here, but much more in the wondrous days to come; and if we realize at all the fellowship into which we have been thus called, we shall find, the more we consider it, the less difficulty in the largeness of revelation here,—a largeness which leads us on into the fulfilment of God’s thoughts and purposes, the objects of adoring contemplation by the principalities and powers in heavenly places, to whom also the Church is to exhibit the various wisdom of God. “To Him,” would the apostle say, “be glory in the Church, throughout all ages;” or, according to the fulness of his more pregnant speech, “throughout all the generations of the age of ages.”

The divisions of Revelation are two only, as fitting in God’s great witness book. They are:

1. (Chaps. i.–iii.) “The things that are,” and
2. (Chaps. iv.–xxii.) “The things that shall be after these.”

NOTES.

DIV. 1.

THE scope of this first division has already been sufficiently considered. The way is open for us to take it up in detail.

There are here two subdivisions, the first chapter being plainly introductory to the two following. In the first of these we have what the Lord refers to as "the things which thou hast seen." The second gives us the addresses to the churches.

SUBD. 1.

In the first subdivision we have Him as the Faithful and True, seen in His oversight of the seven assemblies representing the Church or assembly of God in its character as light-bearer for Him upon earth. The details alone can give us what is really before us here, so that there is no profit in seeking first of all to outline this. It is not as yet prophecy, of course, but an introduction to the prophecy, one which is of the greatest importance for true intelligence as to the prophecy itself. But let us proceed in an orderly way through it.

Sec. 1.

The book has, in accordance in general with other prophetic books, but in contradistinction from all the other books of Scripture, a title of its own, a title which is clearly meant to mark its importance for us. This, too, is emphasized with a distinct announcement of the blessedness both of the reader and hearer of it—if they hear practically; that is, *keep* the things which are written in it. It is "A Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass." It is astonishing that some who even have a view of the book beyond most others should take this "revelation of Jesus Christ" to be His own appearing, as in the nineteenth chapter. It is quite true, of course, that this is called His revelation (1 Cor. i. 7; 2 Thess. i. 7). The heavens that now conceal Him, except to faith, are to give Him back to human sight at last. Nevertheless, the revelation spoken of here is plainly such because it is meant to show "things which must shortly come to pass." It is a revelation which He receives as Man for men, and the style is here what has been referred to but a moment since, as where the Lord says to His disciples, "All things that I have heard from My Father I have made known unto you." Christ is always in this way leading us to the Father, making us realize that He Himself is the gift of the Father's love to us, and bidding us see the Giver in the Gift. The Father is also He who reveals Christ to souls, as we see in the Lord's words to Simon Peter: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Here it is God putting honor upon the One who has taken this place with men and for men; and we may notice at once that it is not merely an inspiration, but a revelation. It is not a mere assistance, as one may say, to human thoughts. *It is a communication of divine thoughts.* It is a lifting of the veil from things, which only God could accomplish. It is not a diviner, divining from things before him in history or otherwise. The apostle is, so to speak, the passive recipient (not, of course, that by this is meant the uninterested recipient) of things which are entirely beyond himself. There need be no question that we are here, thus far, upon ground on which, not the prophets of the Old Testament alone, but those of the New Testament also, stood when predicting the future. They spoke better than they knew. One can easily understand how John himself would look with wonder and delight into what his own hand had written concerning these things. Only there was not for him that word which the Old Testament prophets had to hear, that not unto himself, but to others, he was ministering. He himself, by the power of the Spirit of God which was in him, was just the one of whom we would naturally say that he was better fitted to understand than

any other what he had written down here. It is remarkable and instructive in this connection that, whatever John's own apprehension might be of the meaning of what is evidently put forth in mysterious terms, (though free for faith to penetrate as it may,) yet tradition, with all the inventive character which belongs to it, has never pretended to furnish us with a single word of explanation as to the visions to which we are coming; we find nothing beyond what John himself by inspiration has given us here. We are shut up absolutely to the inspired words themselves. Nothing has been committed to us by tradition. The break is absolute. Who can doubt that there were apostolic comments upon many of these things? But not a word has come to us with this apostolic signature to give it authority. We must gather from the Word, and from the Word alone. It is a "revelation," then, of Jesus Christ; that is, a revelation made by Him, which God gave Him, "to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass." We have to mark that the book is distinctly a servant's book. One may say all Christ's own are His servants. That is true, of course, in a certain way. We would not question this, but emphasize it. Nevertheless, it is of importance we should understand that we must be with a spirit of service in our hearts in order to have title to apprehend the things that are here. They have to do with our service. They are not merely things to inform the intellect, or even to illumine the soul with glory; but they are specially and distinctively things which have practically to do with the path of service. They are the revelation of the whole field, as one may say, through which the path leads; and thus they are things not only to be heard, as men speak of hearing, but to be kept—things that are to *keep us*, in fact—keep our feet as we go through the world. Instead of Revelation being a book of dreams, there is nothing more practical than what we find in it.

Although we are in responsibility always, and in heart, it is to be trusted, servants of Christ, yet we may find, when we look at what is contained in Revelation, at the things which are given as necessary for the servant's service, that it supposes a heart exercised by the things around, such as few servants, it may be feared, attain unto. If we were to ask ourselves honestly, how much need do we realize of such a revelation, it might give us a good deal of practical searching of heart. Each servant of course has his own path, his own special line of service; yet it is evident from what we have here that no one is intended to be in such a way outside the general course of things in the Church or in the world as to be unaffected by them. In fact, the less we contemplate them, the less we are exercised by them, the more we shall be affected, but not for good. God means us to have our eyes open, our consciences on the alert; and not only that, but that the concerns of Christ at large should be our concerns; that we should feel them so; should seek to serve Him, not without the apprehension of how much the individual course acts upon the general condition of things. We may think of this influence as almost infinitesimal; scarcely to be taken into account; and humility, no doubt, may say this. Nevertheless, with any one who is truly a servant of Christ, indwelt by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of service, it is impossible to say how much may be the result, under God, of that which, looked at in itself, may well be counted infinitesimal. God's way is to work His wonders oftentimes by the smallest agencies and instrumentalities, that the work may be seen to be of Him, and not of man. And the heart that is for Him is what He values. If there be this, and we have learnt to identify ourselves with the Master we serve, with all His interests, the life resulting must necessarily be fruitful; more fruitful it may be, far, than we can ever be permitted to know. It is evident that to all of us here, to all Christians, these things are given, and that "blessed are they who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein."

"The things," too, are explained as "things which must shortly come to pass." This is, of course, to have effect upon us. They are things in the current of which we are, not things that are merely coming to pass at some indefinite future time beyond us. We are somewhere in the current of them; just

THE REVELATION OF JOHN.

DIVISION 1. (Chaps. i.-iii.)

The Things that are.

SUBDIVISION 1. (Chap. i.)

The Faithful and True, in oversight of the Assemblies.

SECTION 1. (Chap. i. 1-3.)

Title and Introduction.

A ^aREVELATION of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his ^bservants the things which must ^cshortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his ^dangel to his servant John, who

a cf. ch. 22.
18, 19.
b Tini. 3.16.
c John 12.
49.
b chr. 1 Cor.
3. 1, 2.
c cf. 1 Cor. 7.
29.
d ch. 22.8,16.

exactly where, we may have to determine for ourselves; although, even so, if we cannot put our foot exactly upon the spot where we really are, it will not be of less importance to look at the things which are behind us, as well as the things that are before us still. All is connected together. The present is the issue of the past, and contains in itself the seed of the future; and if we would be wise indeed we must trace the beginning of things, and follow them to their end. The means of doing this is in the book before us. How immensely valuable and how intensely interesting, therefore, it must be!

This, then, is what the revelation means. The mode of communication is not to be passed over. "He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatsoever things he saw." Notice the person to whom the revelation is made, who speaks of himself very soon afterwards as the brother of and joint partaker with all Christians in "the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus." John is one of ourselves, and he wants to be understood to be one of ourselves. He is a sample of those to whom this testimony is committed. He is one ready to testify, and to take, also, through grace, the consequences of faithful testimony. Such an ear, as it is always open, will never lack hearing words which sound in the ears of other men, yet at the same time are not discerned in the same way by others.

Yet here, notice, there is an apparent reserve. One would not expect it, quite. One would think of Christ as in His grace Himself speaking directly to His servant, as He spoke to him upon earth. John was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He was the one who, lying upon His breast at supper, could put his personal questions to the Lord who loved him, and get direct answer. Yet here an angel is the means of communication. That always, in things of this nature, seems to imply a certain measure of distance; not, of course, that it is meant that angelic service does this. The angels are all, as we know, ministers "to those who shall be heirs of salvation;" but their ministry in this way is not in general shown in revealing things, as far as we have Scripture with regard to it. The *Spirit of God* reveals, and on earth *human* voices take up the testimony. God may send His angel to Cornelius, but it is not by the angel whom He sends that the testimony is to be given. *Peter* is the one who is to give this—an instrumentality far less competent, as we should naturally think; nevertheless, it is the instrumentality which the Lord Jesus, the *human* Head of the Church, speaking on earth through His members, makes use of. Yet here it is by His angel that He speaks to His servant John; and this reminds us that in the book itself we have in a certain place the Angel-Priest who puts His incense to the

testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, "whatsoever things he saw. Blessed is he that	<i>e. cf. vers. 12, 13, etc.</i>
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prayers of the saints. The action there declares the Lord Himself. None but Himself could add anything to prayers offered, as He does there. Yet He is spoken of as an angel rather than as a man, and, as we shall see, the whole connection here suggests a mystery—the Lord Himself as One more distant than He loves to be. We are quite sure He would not affect distance merely, as He would not desire to take such a place. He must be constrained to it in some way. The place He takes here, through the ministry that He is pleased to use, seems to have the same intimation in a kind of distance in the way of communicating things which, nevertheless, display the fulness of His love in communicating them. What constrains Him to such distance? We are not to imagine, of course, anything like a lack of intimacy between John himself and the Lord. Nothing here speaks of that. He is singled out of all men as the one capable of receiving these communications. He is the one, of all men, most in the Lord's mind. The distance, whatever it is, is more, as we should say, official than personal. Is it not the state of things in general which affects the character of that which is, as we know, not for John simply, but for the whole Church? a Church, alas, which in general, as too plainly shown us here, is declining, or declined, from its first love. Thus there is a sort of distance in the method of communication. In it love itself speaks, for Christ is God manifest, and God is Love; but it is a love that is grieved and saddened, rather than able to show itself as it fain would do.

If we recall what is so peculiar in the book of Daniel, a book so intimately linked as it is with Revelation, we cannot but realize how there also there is everywhere angelic ministry; angels move, as one would say, continually before us. There is no such opening elsewhere in Scripture to see the service which angels perform amongst men. The revelation given to Daniel is to one "greatly beloved," as is manifest also in his being the repository of things such as these; yet Israel has ceased to be nationally the people of God, and it is "the times of the Gentiles" that have come in. The distance therefore is unmistakable; and while it only brings in the Lord in special ways to minister to those that are true to Him, and to provide through them for His people at large, yet at the same time it is suited that there should be the testimony to the general condition. It is suitable also that the parabolic style should be employed which the Lord Himself employed, (although this is by no means the whole reason here,) when revealing things hitherto hidden amongst a people that had turned in heart away from Him. The parable enshrines the truth while it puts a veil over it, a veil which itself may attract, and should attract, the hearts of His people, to learn what is hidden behind it—a veil which is meant to invite research, not discourage it, but which at the same time requires true exercise before God, and earnestness of spirit on the part of those who would penetrate it.

So it is here. "He sent and signified it"—made it known by signs, and in things which John saw. Revelation is essentially, in this way, a vision; and a vision, moreover, of things in themselves meant to be enigmatical. This need not daunt us when we realize the question which the Lord puts to His disciples when as yet they do not understand the parable that He has spoken to them: "Do ye not know this parable?" He says, "and how, then, will ye know all parables?"—a wonderful word, indeed, which should make us begin to realize how many things there may be around us with deep, deep meaning, such as we should love to have unfolded to us, and which yet only remain hidden from us by our lack of simple earnestness of faith. The parabolic style is so much the style of Revelation that it is hard to understand how any expositor should so fail to realize this as to insist upon absolute literality anywhere. In heaven itself, and in the central Object there, we find "a Lamb as it had been slain." You say, we know at once who is meant by that. Yes, but nevertheless, what is the style of speech here? Is it literal? Need we expect to go out from where

'readeth, and they who ^shear the words of the prophecy, and ^akeep the things which are written therein; for the 'time is at hand.

f cf. Ps. 1. 2
g ch. 2. 7, etc.
h ch. 22. 7
i ch. 22. 20.

we have heard heaven itself speaking in this way, and find things that are going on upon earth revealed with absolute plainness and literality? There is no congruity in this; and, moreover, it is not according to the general style in which the future is set before us in the prophets. In our own city, "the new Jerusalem," what mean these foundations of precious stones, these rivers and this tree of life, these gates of pearl and this street of gold like transparent glass? We know, indeed, while it does not lessen our wonder, that there are those who take all these things according to the simple letter of what we read; but surely it is plain that here also, here in some sense in a special way, the apostle's words are true, that "we see yet through a glass darkly," or, as the word really means, "in a riddle," "an enigma." We see not yet "face to face." Only in this way have the things spoken their proper dignity, their spirituality and fulness of blessing for us. We may wish, perhaps, that they were somewhat plainer. God, on the other hand, would rather invite us by these apparent difficulties, and make us seek with only the more energy to possess ourselves of what, through grace, is written for us, and therefore given to us, yet left for us to be exercised about, and to learn in proportion as we are really subject to that blessed Spirit who in the saints "searches the deep things of God."

Alas, how gladly we would have no "deep things" to search into, but everything so simple and clear that no child could mistake the import. That is not God's way. The very confusion of Christendom is witness that it is not God's way. Scripture, written by inspiration of God, as it declares for itself, "that the *man of God* may be thoroughly furnished," intimates thus the moral character necessary that there may be this furnishing. Is it not right that it should be so? Do we not need the stir or impetus that such admonitions should give us? This surely is what He who is infinitely wise has ordained for us everywhere, whether in nature or in Scripture—deeper things than we have ever fathomed, mysteries which reveal no secrets to the slothful-hearted, while to the one who longs, and longs, to realize something of the fulness of the gift which God has given, the words arch over him as a bow of promise, with their tender inquiry: "Do ye not understand this parable? and how, then, will ye know all parables?" Think of our destiny; think of the hope that our Lord would raise in us when He puts questions of such a character! And yet they are questions for our souls to settle with Him. We shall find everywhere in Revelation that we are not to be saved from that; that God deals with us as those who ought to have understanding, and who have, whatever they may be themselves, an all-wise, a perfect Interpreter of divine things. Must we not grasp this in some measure, in order to understand and realize how blessed is he that readeth and they who hear the words of this prophecy? Not the world alone, but the masses of Christians say—how little certain is any interpretation of the book of Revelation! Why do they still call it Revelation, then? Or how is it that the title given here does not place it in awful reproof to them as they look at it—"A Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass"? Has He shown them, or has He *not* shown them? Has He shown them only in such a way as to produce confusion in the minds of those to whom they are shown? Has He written them down so poorly that men may, without blame on their part, be in continual collision with one another as to their meaning? Are we going to take the shame of this ourselves? Or are we going to impute it to the One who, out of the fulness of His love, has given us such a prophecy? Is there not the blessedness of him who reads? Do not those who read as before God find it? And if the things are to be "kept" that are written therein, can they be kept without the certain knowledge of what is written? Suppose we have not actually what is written, how far and painfully may we be misled by our very effort to keep what is here!

SECTION 2. (Chap. i. 4-8).

The address and response.

¹ (4, 5): The greeting and benediction.

¹ JOHN to the ^jseven assemblies which are in Asia:
²Grace unto you and peace from him who ^tis, and who

^j ver. 11.
^k cf. Rom. 1. 7, etc.
^l cf. Ex. 3. 14.

Is there no hand that we can firmly grasp, or that will firmly grasp ours, and lead us through? Assuredly there is. Only we must be, as James says, not merely "hearers," but "doers of the work." We must be in earnest desire to do the will of God. For such, all Scripture is written; for such, in a special way, the book of Revelation is written. And what we need to ask ourselves, as we take up the closing book,—the book which completes all Scripture,—is, have we the faith that can count upon God to give us these things? Have we in our hearts the purpose to keep what is written therein? Are we those who, adding to their faith virtue, learn in this way to add to virtue, knowledge? This is God's way, and there is no other.

Sec. 2.

We have read now the inscription over the doorway, and we may enter the building itself. What we have first here is the character of Revelation as a writing by John to the seven assemblies in Asia; and we have, as it were, awakened by the first words of this the response of the Church to Him who speaks to them through John, to Him to whose constant love they owe this Book—to Him who is coming, as they now testify, to the earth once more, exchanging His invisible for visible glory, so that "every eye shall see Him," Israel, "who pierced Him," and all the tribes of the earth awake to their true condition as they realize His presence. The seal of God is put to this testimony. God it is, in fact, who is giving testimony to His Son, and who is now about openly to glorify Him.

¹ John is writing, then, to the seven assemblies which are in Asia; and, writing by the Spirit, whatever is written is with a benediction. So here, the "grace" "and peace from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ."

But let us notice, first, those to whom the writing is given. It is to all of us, is it not? That has been declared. It is given to show His servants, Christ's servants, things which must shortly come to pass. No one will dream that that meant only seven assemblies in Asia now passed away, and yet it is to the seven assemblies that the writing is. They are, therefore, in some sense plainly representative assemblies, and, as we see them presently, seven lamps, amid which the Son of Man walks, to see how that which He has kindled is giving light. We must surely understand that it is not simply in Asia that He is walking, or amid seven assemblies there, but that it is the Church as a whole that is addressed; while, nevertheless, it is the Church, in character as such, these seven assemblies present to us. That we shall more and more realize as we go on to what is written, but even upon the face of it one would say it should be evident. Was the epistle to Corinth for the church at Corinth simply? or Paul's epistle to Ephesus merely to the church at Ephesus? Or has any other epistle in Scripture been written simply for the blessing of those who are formally addressed in it? The seven assemblies in question are long since passed away. Has the instruction passed? or, rather, has it not gained for us a vividness and power such as those to whom it was addressed could hardly realize? The Spirit of God is addressing it to-day, with fuller application than ever, to the Church at large. He is making it known to those to whom it is really addressed, and the various calls which we find in it to him that hath an ear to hear are decisive as to our part in it. But why, then, is it not directly given to the Church at large, instead of to seven assemblies that are in Asia? There must be a reason for this, as there is a reason for everything in Scripture. The reason is, as already said, that the seven assemblies are, in fact, representative assemblies; that they give us conditions which are found in the Church at large, and which, even by the

"was, and who is to ^acome; and from the seven ^ospirits which are before his throne, and from ^pJesus Christ,

^m cf. Ps. 90

^{2.}

ⁿ cf. Mal. 3

1. ^o ch. 4. 5; cf. Is. 11. 2. ^p cf. Phil. 2. 10

very uncertainty of where exactly they may be found, appeal to us the more to examine them—the more to exercise ourselves with regard to all that is written here.

But there is another view of the matter. These seven assemblies are all found in one little district (in fact, only the western coast) of what we call Asia Minor, or Little Asia. It was the Roman province of Asia in John's day, and it was of it that the apostle Paul, who had labored largely there, so much, indeed, that all Asia had heard the Word in some way by his means, wrote in his last epistle to Timothy (the last epistle which, we have reason to believe, he ever wrote), with the sad reminder, "This thou knowest, that all they that are in Asia have departed from me." Whoever these were, however many in fact are embraced by those words, yet it is plain that Asia was already then the scene of a revolt against the apostle himself; a revolt which he himself, in his last address to the elders of Ephesus, had not indistinctly warned them of. Why is it then, just to these that these epistles are addressed? Does not this add its voice to what we have already seen, that the manner of the communication here would speak to us of distance which has come in more or less between the Lord and His own?—on their side, of course, not really upon His, but which still gave character to His utterances. If, then, these seven assemblies in Asia are representative assemblies, as they surely are, if the Lord chose these as the very ones who were to receive this revelation, how can it fail to tell us of the condition of the Church at large, and indeed through the times through which the Revelation itself will carry us—however much there are, thank God, everywhere ears that hear and souls that overcome.

But there is now to be *overcoming*, not simply the overcoming of the world, as on the part of every Christian who believes that the crucified Lord of glory is the Son of God, but an overcoming in the Church itself of evil that has arisen there, and of evil which, according to the announcements already made in Scripture, would go on more and more developing until, the present restraint upon it being removed, "the mystery of iniquity," already working, would develop into full manifestation in the "man of sin," to be destroyed by the breath of the Lord at His appearing.

All the more, if possible, not less, there comes to those addressed this greeting of grace and peace from the whole glorious Godhead. It is what we need first to realize before we enter upon communications of such a nature as we have here:—grace in which we stand, unconditioned grace which can never fail, therefore, in its fulness of blessing for the people of God, whatever their circumstances; and peace, that we may be able to contemplate the sorrows and the evils that are before us—waves which, the higher they are, will only the more cast us upon the Rock of refuge. Always, under all circumstances, broken to pieces as the general Church may be, confusion everywhere, the world and Church mixed up beyond hope of disentanglement,—amid discordant voices, each with a different rendering of "the things that are," contradicting each other with warnings and with promises in the face of all the unity which the Church as the temple of God, indwelt by the Spirit of God, implies,—yet unfaithfully is there "grace and peace" for every one who is invited of God to listen to what His voice shall utter, after all so easy to be distinguished, one would say, from every contradictory voice of man that can be. Grace and peace are what this whole communication from Him means.

"Grace," then, "and peace" are "from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come." That is a very different title of God from that which we find in the epistles in the same connection. It is not "from our God and Father," though of course He is this, but from the unchangeable One, the ever-present, ever the same. This is but the translation of "Jehovah," as we see at once;

the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

q cf. 1 Tim.

6. 13.

cf. John 3.

11. *r* Col. 1. 18; *cf.* 1 Cor. 15. 20, 23. *s* *cf.* ch. 19. 16; *cf.* Ps. 72. 11.

and "Jehovah" is the covenant-God and at the same time God in government. It is not our relationship to Him of which we are reminded, but of His necessary relationship to time, and all things therefore that are in time. The One who was before all, who abides through all, is the One upon whom all created things are necessarily dependent. "Who is" is put first. That He is, is the one great fact for all of us; but then, He "who is," was. There has been no beginning for Him, and there has been no change. He "who is," "was;" and He "who is" and "was" is He also "who is to come." There will still be no change, as there will be no successor to Him. Grace and peace from such a One as this, how much it means for us, perfectly revealed as He is now also in the Man Christ Jesus, known in the depths of His love by the redemption which He has accomplished for us! This is not what is spoken of here, but it is what is necessary that grace and peace should be to us from Him. Then it is "from the seven spirits which are before His throne." We see at once the style of Revelation in this. The seven spirits are but the sevenfold energy of the One, the Holy Spirit, acting in accordance with the mind of Him who is upon the throne, and in the energy implied by that throne itself. Revelation is the book of the throne; and that is what gives character to all that we have here. The seven spirits carry us on to where they are pictured as "seven lamps of fire before the throne," light-giving necessarily as God's acts are, for God's ways show forth His nature—Himself, whose ways they are. These seven spirits carry us back to the eleventh of Isaiah, where we find them in connection with the King of Israel, the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, of whom it is said, "And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Here we have the arrangement of the lamps in connection with the candlestick of the sanctuary, which, as we know, were in three pairs, with a central stem. This central and uniting stem bears witness that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jehovah, the covenant-God. The branches give us the character displayed; the pairs, their character as witness, three pairs bringing in the number of divine fulness and of manifestation; the whole seven, the complete display of God in these ways of His. In Isaiah the seven spirits are in connection with Christ as Man. They make Him "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, so that He does not judge after the sight of His eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of His ears, but judges with righteousness the poor, and reproves with equity for the meek of the earth."

Grace and peace then, from these, what does it mean for us? The throne of God, with all that manifests it as His throne, power and wisdom, truth and holiness—all these manifested in fullest blessing for us. What a beginning for the study of Revelation to realize this!

And now we come to Him through whom all this is found for us—"Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the First-born from the dead and the Ruler of the kings of the earth." The saints are in witness-character, as we see in John here, but after all, how feeble is their witness; and if you take the Church at large, how unfaithful has often the witness been! But here is the one faithful Witness, who abides as that, whatever may be the failure of His people. A blessed thing to know how His Word speaks for Him in this, and how Christ is indeed a witness to Himself, whatever His people may be! But He has indeed borne witness to our condition naturally, to the sin from which He has come to deliver us. He has gone down into death, the fruit of this sin; and risen up from it, not for Himself alone, but as First-born or pledge of the many who through Him and in His likeness come out of death also. The righteousness of the throne has been fully maintained by Him, and the power of the throne can be safely entrusted in His hands; as the glory of God was entrusted to Him when He went

² (6, 7): The response of the Church.

² To him that 'loveth us, and hath "washed * us from our sins in his [own] blood, and he hath made us a "kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to him be

t Eph. 5. 25.
Eph. 3. 19.
" 1 Jno. 1. 7.
ch. 7. 14.
v 1 Pet. 2. 9.

* Some of the earliest MSS. read, "freed."

down to death. Risen up from it, He is therefore worthily "the Ruler of the kings of the earth," that earth which He has purchased with all in it for Himself, by His blood shed. "The kings of the earth" are they that in a special manner have rejected Him, as we know. They are still, in the mass, rejecting Him. Nevertheless, He is the Ruler owned of God, now ruling upon the Father's throne; and, when He asks, to have His own throne given Him, and all His enemies subjected to Him, the footstool of His feet. This is the One to whose servants the Revelation is given; and how simple where faith is simply the service of such an One, whatever may be the destruction and confusion in the world around!

² The voice of the Church here breaks in in praise: "To Him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be the glory and might unto the ages of ages." "Loveth us," it should be, not "loved us;" for His love abides, while it has shown itself out in the removal of our sins from before God forever, so that we can take our blessing fearlessly as in connection with this glorious throne which has subjected us first to itself, our hearts made His whose the kingdom is, while we are brought near—not servants merely, but those who have access as priests to His God and Father. It is His God and Father still, because He is the One who is the Centre of the scene here, the One from whom all the blessing flows, God acting for the Son of His love, seen as His God who has revealed Him to us as well as in unique relationship to Him as Father. "To Him be the glory and the might," not simply for the millennial age, (for the kingdom in the hands of the Son of Man which is soon to come,) but "for the ages of ages." He is "the Father of Eternity," as Isaiah speaks. He is the One who brings everything, after sin has wrought its worst dishonor and done all it could for ruin, into subjection to God.

Our common version has, "He hath made us kings and priests." That which is commonly accepted now is "a kingdom, priests," a kingdom whose subjects, as far as we are concerned, are priests, worshipers brought near to God with the spirit of praise and thanksgiving, eternally. The expression reminds us at once of what was conditionally offered to Israel, that if they would obey God's voice and keep His covenant, they should be to Him a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. They must be, first of all, a holy nation, in order to be in this way priests to God. The white linen garment of the priest was the testimony of the character which he must have who approached to God in this way; and it was here, as we know, that Israel signally failed. They had chosen a covenant of law instead of the grace that had taken them up and brought them out of Egypt; and the law for them, as for all others, was a law working wrath. They could not abide under it; and instead of a kingdom of priests, the priesthood of Aaron and his sons—merciful provision as it might be in view of their circumstances—yet bore witness to their ruin as under it. But here is a people who are all priests, as Peter has borne witness: "A holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," and "a royal priesthood" also, "to show forth the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." Here grace has reigned indeed unto peace, and nothing finally fails of the blessing.

Here, then, is the response of the hearts of His people to Him, the song of victory with which they are taught to go into the battlefield. Conflict is before us, as we know. The very Prince of Peace, as the necessary result of what He is, has brought the sword instead of peace; and all along the way there is now the need of overcoming; but the end is certain, and the song of triumph is raised at the beginning—the song of His triumph who has prevailed for us, and as a con-

³ (8): The seal of God.

the ^wglory and the might unto the ages of ages. Amen. Behold he ^xcometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and such as ^ypierced him, and all the tribes of the earth ^{*}shall ^{*}wail because of him.

³ Yea, amen. I am the "Alpha and the Omega,"† saith the Lord God, ^bhe who is, and who was, and who is to come, the ^cAlmighty.

* Or, "land."

† It is worthy of note that "Alpha" is written in full in the text, while "Omega" is not, the letter Ω being given only.

ch. 22. 13. ^b ver. 4; ^cf. Ex. 3. 14; ^cf. Ps. 90. 2 with Prov. 8. 23, etc. ^c ^cf. Gen. 17. 1 with Matt. 28. 18.

^w 1 Tim. 6. 16.
^{ch.} 5. 12.
^x Dan. 7. 13.
Matt. 26. 64.
^cf. Ps. 97. 2-6.
^y Zech. 12. 10.
John 19. 37.
^cf. Gen. 42. 6, 21.
^z Matt. 24. 30.
^cf. Lk. 23. 30.
^a ch. 21. 6.

sequence a song which can never be silenced by the noise of combatants, by the strife which cannot disturb the ineffable peace of those to whom He gives peace.

This is the tribute of the redeemed to their Redeemer, and now we have their testimony also: "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and such as pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him." This, it is plain, is not the coming of the Lord to take us to Himself. It is a coming to the earth when the heavens give back Him whom they have so long concealed, except to faith—when "every eye shall see Him." And here we are carried back at once to Zechariah to find Israel brought fully to repentance at the sight of Him who was wounded in the house of His friends. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem," and "in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Thus early the Jew takes his place in the prophecy of Revelation, while it is true that what is here may contemplate a wail wider than that of Israel's repentance. The word both in Greek and Hebrew for "earth" is the same as "land," and "all the tribes of the earth" (or land) make us necessarily find Israel here as in Zechariah. Nevertheless, the outlook in Revelation is naturally wider here, and there may be a wail, too, which is not that of repentance, but the wail of awful fear, when men cry to the rocks to fall on them and the mountains to cover them, to hide them from the face of the Lamb they have despised. Here is the Christian's testimony, and it has naturally to do not with Israel only, but with all the earth.

³ There is now immediately another response. The "Yea, amen," that follow here are not the voice of those that have just spoken, but a greater Voice. They are the affirmation of the truth of this on the part of One who is the Alpha and Omega, the Lord God, whose speech is, as it were, thus the beginning and end of all speech. Nothing can precede, nothing can supplement it, and how blessed is this testimony given by God to Christ! It is the unrepentant, unchanging Lord who says this. It is Jehovah, "who is and who was, and who is to come," and it is the Almighty, able to bring about all that which He foretells. It is He who, as the apostle says in Hebrews, bringeth again the First-born into the world. He comes, not in His own glory only, but in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels. Thus worthily is the seal of God put upon the announcement of the coming One. In Christ Himself, as the apostle tells us, is the Yea and the Amen of all the promises of God. Suited it is that God should put His yea and amen now to this promise; and while it is of necessity, through the sin of man, an announcement of judgment also, yet it is that through which alone blessing can come for man. Through these clouds the bow of promise is manifest, and "when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." This closes the introduction to the book as a whole.

SECTION 3. (Chap. ii. 9-20.)

*The Risen Priest among the golden lamps.*1 (9-11):
The com-
mission.

¹ I ^a JOHN, your ^e brother and joint-partaker in the ^f tribulation and ^g kingdom and ^h patience in Jesus, was ^{*} in the island that is called Patmos, for the ⁱ word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. I became ^j in

* The same word, *ἐγενόμην*.3. 5. *i* cf. Acts 5. 41. *j* ch. 4. 2; cf. ch. 17. 3; cf. Lk. 4. 1.

d ver. 4.
cf. Jno. 21.
20-24.
ch. 22. 8.
e cf. Acts 10.
25, 26.
f cf. Jno. 16.
33.
g cf. Jas. 2.5.
h cf. Heb. 2.
8.
cf. 2 Thess.
1. 11.

Sec. 3.

We now come to the first vision, the vision of Christ Himself, and in a way suited to what we have in the first part of Revelation, the messages to the churches. The Lord is here the Priest with the golden snuffers in His hand for His lamps of testimony; and this, as we shall see, has reference to the first part of the book only—"the things that are," the time of the Church's testimony, now fast coming to an end.

¹ We have first the commission of the seer: "I John, your brother and joint partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus." John joins himself thus to those he is addressing. He is their representative, in fact already in the kingdom, but in a kingdom to be in which aright involves necessarily tribulation. It is not the kingdom and *glory* of Christ. It is "the kingdom and patience"—the kingdom in which the cross is still the significant emblem. It is a time which, if appreciated, will be realized as one of marvelous privilege, with all the affliction that it implies, and even just on account of that very affliction. It is the kingdom of the Sufferer, and who is initiating His people into that suffering, through which He Himself has come to the crown, and through which it is His grace to them that they should come also to the crown; for it is "if we suffer," that "we shall also reign with Him." Nothing can set this aside, however things may change here and the Christian world may imagine itself beyond the application of such things to them. The drill and discipline here are the training for glory. They are the initiation into the mind of Christ, for those who are to be with Christ when He comes. They are not to be onlookers merely, but those who have learnt in themselves the reality of the conflict between good and evil, and have found in the God of resurrection the One who of necessity, first of all, puts His seal upon man's natural condition, in order that He may show Himself only supreme in His own grace and power beyond it. For us, the evening and the morning must always make the day, until that Sabbath comes when these things shall no more be spoken of, although their memory and their blessing shall abide forever.

John, then, is on the isle that is called Patmos,* for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. That speaks at once for itself as to the treatment of the Word and the testimony of Jesus. He is an outcast exile. He is alone, as one for whom the world has no place or portion. He is apart from its strifes and from its glories; not indifferent to all that is going on, not self-exiled, not of his own choice a desert-dweller, not an anchorite or hermit, but one for whom the world has been what it has been to the Lord Himself,—one banished, as Christ was banished out of it. He is keeping the word of Christ's patience, and we know from his own words directly, what the Lord thinks of those who do so. Thus it is no wonder if Patmos be full of other visitants, and if heaven

* The island called Patmos is easily located as one of the Sporades in the Grecian Archipelago, settled early and with remains of a primitive civilization. It is described as a barren rocky island and with no remainders of the palms which once gave it the name Palma. As usual, chapels and monkish asylums abound. Of the significance of its name the Lexicons give no mention. There is much similarity between it and the root meaning "to tread under foot," and another meaning "to suffer." Both certainly would be appropriate for one who was being trampled under the foot of Rome, and suffering with Christ.—S. R.

[the] Spirit on the ^aLord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a ^btrumpet, saying, What thou seest ^cwrite in a book, and send [it] to the ^dseven assemblies: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

cf. Acts 20. 7.
cf. 1 Cor. 16. 2.
cf. Mk. 16. 9.
cf. ch. 4. 1.
cf. Ex. 19. 19, 20.
cf. ver. 19.
cf. ch. 10. 4.

n cf. Acts 20. 28-30; *cf.* 1 Cor. 7. 17.

be opened here to the outcast of earth. It is the way to realize such revelations as we are to be introduced to, and we must not look at it as if these things for us were over,—as if we were merely reading a book which has been so furnished to us. No, we are to read it as those who are the brethren of John, and joint-partakers with him “in the tribulation and kingdom and patience in Jesus.”* If we have not something of this spirit, we shall scarcely read it aright.

Here, then, it is that the Spirit comes upon him in power: “I became in the Spirit,” he says, “on the Lord's day.” It has been thought by many that this, which is in fact a unique phrase in Scripture, “the Lord's day,” is only another way of putting “the day of the Lord,” and that the seer here was, in spirit, carried on to that day at the time of which he speaks. But the difference of phrase has its own meaning. There is no difference of this sort which is meaningless in the word of God; and then just in this very part of the book which we are to consider here, it is manifestly *not* the day of the Lord that is before us. “The things that are” and “the day of the Lord” are in reality in opposition to one another. It is “the Lord's day” here, just as we have “the Lord's supper” in Corinthians,—literally “the Dominical supper,” and so here, “the Dominical day.” We have no word, unfortunately, in English which will convey this rightly; but “the Lord's day” as distinctly characterizes the present period, as “the day of the Lord” would say that is was ended. “The Lord's day” is the day on which we celebrate the Lord's death until He comes. It is the day in which we realize the triumph which Christ already has accomplished for us, and only in anticipation go on to the day of His full and eternal triumph. When there is to be chronicled “what the Spirit saith unto the churches,” what can be more suited than to be “in the Spirit” on a day like this?

“I became in the Spirit” of course is a special thing. It is not merely what is always proper to the Christian. It is the prophet engaged with his prophecy, who speaks to us thus. The Spirit of God has laid hold of him, eyes, and ears and everything, so as to carry him, as it were, whither He would. It is not “I was in the Spirit,” but “I became in the Spirit.” It is not that it was constant with him, but that which for him was temporary only. We have in the fourth chapter another time in which he “became in the Spirit,” and that is the introduction to the “things that shall be,”—the things that are to come after the present things are ended. Here the Lord's day gives character, as one may say, to the visions of the seer. He sees the Lord in the midst of the assemblies. He sees what the Lord has to say with regard to things that are actually round about him at that very time. They are made, no doubt, the witnesses of the future, but they are still actually existing, things with which the Lord is occupied; and thus he is not transported to any future time, nor sees things that are yet to take place, but things that are, in fact, taking place already. Yet he is not, as is evident, in the spirit of worship simply. He is not called now to remember the Lord's death. He is called in a certain sense away from this. It is “*behind him*” that he hears a great voice which is as of a trumpet, a loud and startling call; and before he sees whence the voice proceeds, he receives his commission: “What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the

* The name Jesus, used without the title here and throughout the book, is significant as showing it is the person, the One who was here, the faithful One who has left His path to His people.—S. R.

² (12-16):
The Priest-
ly Judge.

² And I turned to see the voice which was speaking with me; and having turned, I saw seven golden ^o lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one

o cfr. Ex. 25.
31-37.
cf. Matt. 5.
14.
cf. Phil. 2.
15, 16.

seven assemblies—to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” Thus the character of the vision attaches, as one may say, all through, to that which he is to communicate. They are direct words uttered, a direct communication given, and yet, even so the assemblies whose condition is thus brought before him are, as is evidenced all through, but a vision of future things. These are but samples chosen with a divine purpose to put before us the state of the Church at large, and, as we cannot but realize when we look into them, successive stages of the Church’s history. The seven assemblies make the completeness of the view presented here, which we find confirmed by the fact of the seven golden lamps representing these assemblies, with which the Lord is seen engaged. He is not engaged, clearly, merely with seven Asiatic churches. He is looking at them, but He is looking through them also. The eyes of fire penetrate beyond the present, as the eyes of One who sees the end from the beginning, and in the things already present on earth finds unfolding the history of that which will be,—is able to see the fruit that is to come out of the tree, and to characterize it. This alone gives worthiness, in fact, to these addresses. They are not merely in view of what was actually existent then, but of the needs of all the Lord’s people at any time of the Church’s existence here on earth; and thus it is that every one that hath an ear is called to hear “what the Spirit saith to the assemblies.”*

² The apostle turns to see the voice that was speaking to him, and having turned he sees the seven golden candlesticks or lampstands, answering in number to the seven lamps of fire which we find afterwards burning before the throne. These represent, as we are by and by told, the seven assemblies, and plainly in their responsibility to exhibit the light of the Spirit during the night of the Lord’s absence. The reference to the golden candlestick of the sanctuary in Israel is evident; but the contrast with this should be also as evident, for the candlestick of the sanctuary was one only, its six branches connected with the central stem; and it speaks of Christ, and not the Church. The seven candlesticks are for lights, not in the sanctuary, (where Christ alone is that) but in the world; and while there is a certain unity in the character of these as representing doubtless the whole Church, yet it is the Church seen, not in its dependent connection with Christ, but historically and externally as assemblies. Each lamp stands upon its own base, that is, in its own responsibility. To speak of the Son of man in the midst as the invisible bond of union is surely a mistake. He is not represented in this manner here. He is not uniting His people together, but judging each separately. Then it is the Church at large that is represented; not the true as distinct from the false, but the general profession. Thus Sardis as a whole is dead and not alive. Christ is outside of Laodicea. In the view that we shall have to take of them, we shall find that while they were actually existing, local assemblies, yet they stand each for the professing Church of a certain epoch or for what in it characterizes the epoch. To see in them but Ephesus and its contemporary assemblies, is indeed to be blind and not see afar off; for the features given are quite unmistakable to those who, with an honest heart, will consider them. They are golden candlesticks, as set for the display of the glory of God, of which the gold speaks; but while they have the privi-

* The reasons for this application of these addresses to the seven churches to the entire history of the Church need not be fully entered into at the outset. They will appear in the addresses as we go on. It may be well however to call attention to their connection with the remainder of the book; that is world wide and final; why should these be confined to one time and place? Then too it is “what the Spirit saith unto the churches”—a term which would include the Church for all time. Notice also that the coming of the Lord is spoken of in each of the last four addresses, suggesting that the churches addressed continue on to the end. But all this will appear as we go on.—S. R.

like unto [the] ²Son of man, clothed with a ³garment down to the feet, and girt about at the breasts with a golden ⁴girdle. His head and his hair were ⁵white as white wool, as snow, and his eyes as a 'flame of fire';

p Dan. 7. 13.

cf. Jno. 6. 62.

q *cf.* Dan. 10.

5.

cf. Ex. 28.

31-35.

cf. Heb. 4. 13.

r *cf.* ch. 15. 6; *cf.* Lk. 22. 27. *s* Dan. 7. 9; *cf.* Ps. 90. 2. *t* Dan. 10. 6; *cf.* Heb. 4. 13.

lege and responsibility of this, they are not necessarily true to it, and, in fact, the candlestick may be removed because it is not.

But we are not occupied at present so much with the lamps as with the One who walks in the midst of them. He is "One like unto a Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle." We are reminded at once of Daniel here, but the Lord is seen in a very different relation from that in which Daniel represents Him. He is in priestly garb, although as we look upon Him we see that characters appear in Him not only of the Son of man, but of the Ancient of days also, with whom in the older prophet, the Son of man is identified. His title, the Son of man, is that which, as we know, the Lord so constantly assumed in His life on earth. It is a title which speaks, not only of humanity, but of how He has *come* into humanity, conforming to the conditions of it, and in a way that links Him with humanity at large. He is true Man, submitting even to the sinless infirmities of manhood. One who has learned in suffering and sorrow what it is to be tempted "in all points like as we are, sin apart." This character, no doubt, in a special way connects Him also with the Gentile Church, not simply with the Jews; but it is not a place of distance, therefore, He is taking, but of nearness to us. He is qualified by His manhood to be the priestly Intercessor for man, although it is not intercession which He is making here; but as the Intercessor He yet fills perfectly the place in which we find Him. The One who stands before God for man is the One who here turns, on the other hand, to man, to His people, to see how they answer to His thoughts and desires for them. All judgment is in this way committed to the Son of man. It is because He is the Son of man that He is just the One fitted to judge man. He will not forget the circumstances, and the weakness amid the circumstances, of those whom He judges. He will not pronounce harsh judgment, and here He is judging in the midst of that which is His own. He is in priestly service with the golden snuffers for the light; Himself girt about with that golden girdle which shows how the glory of God is the object before Him.* But the girdle is not about the loins, it is about the breasts, for which here a remarkable word is used which signifies ordinarily the *woman's* breasts. We are to be reminded of the tenderness of heart which is His, of a love greater than a woman's.

With all this, He is not a mere Son of man. He is more than this, as the words "One like unto a Son of man" would plainly indicate. Why "like unto," if He were indeed only this? The very form of the expression here is what we find in Daniel. He is, in fact, the divine-human Mediator as God and Man, between God and man. Yet, as already said, He is not interceding. The characters which follow show Him as when He comes to judge the world, yet these are applied in the third and fourth addresses to the judgment of the churches. To Pergamos He writes as One that hath the sharp sword with two edges, and to Thyatira as the Son of God who has His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass. This is indeed a plain intimation of how far the world and the Church have become one in what is represented in these assemblies, but we are as yet occupied with His person here.

First of all, "His head and His hair are white as white wool, as snow,"—the character plainly of the Ancient of days, but where the years which should

Some have thought the girdle about the breasts suggested the *repression* of that love which would naturally have spoken in our Lord. But it is enough to remember that the girdle is the symbol of service, concentration for effort; and secondly that nowhere does our Lord show more love than in this very judgment of the assemblies. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten."—S. R.

and his feet were like fine "brass, as if they were burning in a furnace; and his "voice was as the sound of many waters; and he had in his "right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp, two-edged "sword; and his countenance was as the "sun shineth in its strength.

u cf. Ezek. 1. 7.
cf. Lev. 28. 19.
cf. Heb. 10. 30.
v ch. 14. 2.
cf. Ps. 29.3-9.
Ezek. 48.2.

w ch.2.1; cf. ch. 5. 1. = ch.19.15; ch.2.12,16; cf. Heb. 4.12. y Matt.17.2; cf. Mal. 4.2; cf. ch. 10.1.

teach man wisdom only furnish the symbol for One with whom what is human attainment is perfect and original. The wisdom that is His is dazzling with its purity. It is absolute righteousness and holiness, and nothing else; and these, which in His eyes are as a flame of fire, search out everything before them, and they are in His feet like white (-hot) brass glowing in a furnace,—judgment resulting from a nature incapable of change, unmistakable, ever against evil. His voice, too, that with which He gives sentence, is as the sound of many waters, as the sound of that ocean which reduces man so easily to his native littleness and impotence. With all this, He has in His right hand, firmly held, those seven stars which we are presently told are the angels of the seven assemblies; not the *candlesticks*, notice, but the *stars*: for the candlesticks are earthly profession, but the stars are heavenly reality. Where He finds this, all the strength of His right hand is there to uphold it. But immediately we return to the character of judgment in the sharp, two-edged sword which, when He comes in judgment, proceeds out of His mouth. Yet His Word is, as we know, like a sharp, two-edged sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." His countenance is radiant as the sun in its strength. The day has not yet come for earth, but here is the One who will bring in the day; and for faith already here is One in whose face all the glory of God is.

Such is the One, then, who is seen here walking among the candlesticks. There is but One who can unite all these characters. Evidently He is before us also as one who is about to come. His coming is always imminent for His saints, and they need the realization of it for all present duty, for the whole path of service, which is thus as a path which shineth with the light upon it unto the perfect day. All this exhibits the Lord as if He had in fact left the sanctuary and were clothing Himself with the cloud in which He returns; and so Scripture, when urging our responsibility upon us, carries us constantly on to the day of His appearing when the result of our conduct here will be brought out and manifested to all. There is a wide distinction recognized in Scripture between this appearing of the Lord and His coming to receive us to Himself, with which, in a beautiful manner, nothing but grace is associated. When He comes to take us it is to be with Himself; and the thought of the Father's house, of our entry into it, is that which the Lord has associated with this. In the Father's house the question is not of separate place; the Father is that to all His children; and this is the first thing which He would connect with His coming for us. There is no need of any judgment first, even of a judgment of works to give us our place in this. In fact, no judgment of works could do it. We are caught up in the likeness of Him who has come to receive us to Himself: our very bodies changed from the image of the earthly to the image of the heavenly, and all alike inasmuch as they are all like His body of glory. Yet the judgment of works comes none the less, but it is always put in a different connection. It is put in connection with the Kingdom, and thus with the appearing. We shall find, as we go on with the book before us, that while the redeemed are upon their thrones all around the throne of God in the fourth chapter, seen by the prophet as soon as he is himself caught up, yet it is only as He is about ready to come forth, that we find of the bride that it is given to her to be clothed in that fine linen which speaks of the righteousnesses of the saints; not the *one* righteousness, Christ Himself, which is upon them all, but that which will also be upon them in its due season, the garment which is needed

³ (17-20):
The re-assurance for
the mani-
festation of
the mystery.

³ And when I saw him, I ^afell at his feet as dead; and he laid his ^aright hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the ^bfirst and the last, and the ^cliving one. And I was ^adead, and behold I am ^aalive unto the ages of the ages; and I have the ^dkeys of death and of hades. Write, therefore, what thou ^ehast seen, and the things that ^bare, and the things that are ^aabout to be after

* Or "became."

26. *a* ch. 5. 9. *e* cf. Rom. 6. 9. *f* cf. 1 Thess. 4. 14; cf. 1 Cor. 15. 20-22. *g* vers. 12-16. *h* chs. 2, 3. *i* ch. 4. 1, etc.

z cf. Dan. 10. 9, 10, 15.
cf. Matt. 28. 2-4.
a cf. ver. 16.
cf. Dan. 8. 17, 18.
cf. Matt. 17. 6, 7.
b ver. 8.
ch. 22. 13.
cf. Is. 41. 4.
c cf. Jno. 5.

to be washed in the blood of the Lamb to make it white, and which yet can thus exhibit what the saints have been for Him as His heart estimates it, when the time of recompense shall have come and love will forget nothing of what response there has been to it in the life of the saint. Thus it is that with His appearing and His kingdom is associated the recompense of works. All exhortations, warnings, encouragements contemplate this time, and so the Lord is seen in the vision here, although He is still among the assemblies. He is walking in the midst, however, not contemplated as the centre of gathering, nor are we to look here for principles of Church-order and discipline and what not, to which all this has been perverted. We are not to look in the book of the Throne and of judgment to find the order of the Church at all. Revelation is not Corinthians, and it is hazardous to take one for the other.

³ The vision of glory overpowers the seer, beloved disciple as he is. "When I saw Him," he says, "I fell at His feet as dead." But then immediately the One whom he has known so well is manifest. "He laid His right hand upon me" (the right hand which holds the stars) "saying, fear not, I am the First, and the Last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and have the keys of death and of hades." What an assurance! How tenderly He unites the invisible glory which belongs to Him as "the First, and the Last, and the Living One," with the acquired glory also of that wondrous death out of which He has come, the risen One with the keys of death and of hades at His girdle, alive for the joy and blessing of His own forevermore! * He who has been in death for us, has turned its awful shadow into morning. The gates of strength have yielded to our Samson, and more, "out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness." "Write, therefore," He adds, with all the comfort of this assurance, "the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after these; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven assemblies, and the seven lampstands are the seven assemblies." These words give us the division of the book. "The things which are" must needs apply, as such, to the seven assemblies which were existent at that time. These things occupy the two chapters following. "The things which shall be after these" (not "hereafter," which is too vague) apply to the things which follow from the fourth chapter on. This is evident, indeed, whatever view we take of the interpretation. If we take even the historical or Church view, in that case there will be still a message to existing assemblies which must, therefore, come before all that is strictly prophetic in the book. "The things which shall be after these" will then be in the strict sense the prophecy. If we take the seven assemblies as designed to give us successive periods in the history of the Church at large until the Lord come, then it is plain that "the things which shall be after these" must show us His earthly people taken up; and the connection will be obvious, as has been already said, with the whole of the Old Testament

* "Death and hades" would seem to suggest the two thoughts: of the grave for the body, and hades, the unseen world, for the spirit. The thought in hades is not so much a *place* as that it is not *here*. It is unseen. As a matter of fact we know that the spirit of the sleeping saint is with the Lord, and yet it is, with reference to this world, in hades.—S. R.

these; the ^j mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest upon my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are ^k angels of the seven assemblies; and the seven lampstands are seven ^l assemblies.	<i>j</i> ctr. ch. 17. 5. <i>k</i> ch. 2.1, etc. <i>l</i> ver. 11.
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prophecy in which the Jew is ever in the forefront, and the Jew is carrying with him the blessing of the whole world.

It has already been sought to show that these two parts (the present things having to do with the Church still upon the earth while waiting for the Lord, and the "things that shall be after these" contemplating Israel's preparation time for the full blessing, which is surely to come to her) give us the complete and fundamental interpretation of the book. Applications may be fully admitted which are yet not the full and final application, which must first of all be sought. It is not necessary to take this up again, but if the addresses to the seven assemblies contemplate only a state of things which, while then existing, has now passed away, then they will have for us of necessity much smaller interest than it should be evident the Spirit of God would have us find in them: and these addresses are already put, by the very title of the book itself, as part of prophecy. It is here that the warning to listen to what is said is at its strongest. It is here that the keeping of the things that are written in the book has most evident application to us; and thus we have distinct warrant for holding the addresses to be prophetic, and we should require very distinct and decisive evidence for refusing them such a place.

The reason also for these addresses not distinctly assuming, as a whole, the prophetic form, can be fully accounted for. Christians have been always taught to watch for their Lord's return as something the time of which they did not know: "Watch, for ye know not when the time is." We should not, therefore, expect the long actual history of the Church's tarrying here to be put before the saints of generations past, to discourage wholly their expectation. It would be to take out of their hands what we may call the lamp of testimony as to the Lord's return, the virgins' lighted lamp, lighted to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. We may in this way also clearly recognize why this view of the seven churches should not and could not be found in earlier expositions of the book. The general exhortations implied in them remain for all, but they could not anticipate what only the Church's history has made known to us; and now, when it is, as we may surely say, becoming clear, it is blessed to see that instead of this being to us a discouragement of any near expectation of the Lord, it is precisely the reverse. Near the end we must be if with assurance we can look back and say this is the Church's history hitherto; and in fact, with the character of Laodicea all around us at the present time, the Lord's words to Philadelphia come home to us with increased power, "Behold, I come quickly." This is what we gather from such an interpretation of the two chapters following now. The Lord is indeed coming quickly. How soon, who can tell? But so far as we can see, nothing remains here certainly to be fulfilled. There *may* be fulfilments which shall evidence themselves as that, if the Lord leaves us but for a short time to go on, but we cannot say that such fulfilments there *will* be. We can indeed take up with a new emphasis the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and say: "We are come unto Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." They are in prospect just before us—God's blessing for the earth, God's higher and more wonderful blessing for His heavenly people,—there is nothing that we know which is certainly between us and these.

SUBD. 2.

We now come to the epistles to the churches, the character of which has been already more or less before us: seven in number, they naturally divide, as seven so often does, into the first four and the last three. Some would have it rather

be the first three and the last four, and this from what we find in the epistles themselves, that in the first three the call to him "that hath an ear to hear" precedes the promise to the overcomer, while in the last four it follows it. There would seem this difference, that when the call precedes the promise we have the whole assembly in some sort addressed; while, when the promise to the overcomer precedes the call, it would seem rather that there is only hope with regard to this special class. The address becomes more individual; a remnant is thoroughly marked out; but while this may be accepted as truth, yet the result does not follow. The truth is that Thyatira, the last of the four, is looked at as running on to the end. The announcement of the Lord's coming is first of all found here, and the state of things depicted in it goes on through all the after-history.

It not only does so, but it characterizes that which in an especial sense arrogates to itself the title of the Church. Rome, as we know, does this, and we shall see that Rome is reached in the epistle to Thyatira; while Babylon the Great, in the second division of Revelation, shows us her end to be after the taking away of the Church, and at the hands of the beast and the ten horns (kings) that receive their power one hour with the beast. In fact, the history during the period shown in these four churches is a progressive history, the end of which is thus fully reached in Thyatira, while in the three following churches, as we shall see when we come to examine them, we have a new departure, no longer the woman and her doctrine, but what is the fruit of a real revival from God, though it ends, alas, once more in a decline which brings it under judgment. Thus also the first four, according to the general character of the number, give a more external view which, as we go on, becomes, as we may say, even political; while the second with all its failure presents that which is at least in its whole claim spiritual, although this claim may in result have to be questioned, or even disallowed.

Sec. 1.

In the first four epistles, then, we find a general identity and unity, however different they may be in development; and in Thyatira that which asserts this more strongly than ever. It is the Church in the fullest way asserted to be catholic,—the Church with its authoritative voice, to which all that are of God are bound to listen. This is the woman who calls herself a prophetess, but who is really Jezebel. Here we find a preparation for what follows, a remnant now becoming separated, although not yet distinctly standing apart: the separation is more in heart and spirit than in outward position; but, for all this, the examination of the details is absolutely requisite. It is enough, therefore, simply to indicate it here.

The first section (with its four addresses) divides again into two parts. This, it has been noticed elsewhere, would indicate no bright and happy state of things. Four is, as we know, the number of the world, or of the creature: but creation as manifesting—as it should manifest—the glory of the Creator, is a three and one, these being the numbers of manifestation and of divine unity and supremacy. Two, on the other hand, is the number of division, therefore of essential frailty, contradiction and evil. This is what we find, accordingly, in what we have here.

1. In the first part we find what may be given as its character, Christ's rule over His people in measure maintained. In the second part we shall find, on the contrary, the dwelling where Satan's throne is, implying, of necessity, something opposed to this; while the woman Jezebel shows us a further step in departure from it. Here again this can be only stated at present. The proof can only be found as we take up the addresses in detail.

¹ We start, then, with Ephesus. The assemblies, as we have noticed, are all Asiatic assemblies, and we have seen already the significance of this; Asia being the scene of a movement which Pauls speaks of distinctly as a departure from himself, that is, evidently from his doctrine, (for that is it with which he identifies himself). Asia also, if the apostle's own voyage to Rome has the typical

1 (1-11):
Christ's
rule meas-
urably
main-
tained.

1 (1-7):
Ephesus.
First love
left, and so
the first
works; the
beginning
of all independency and decline.

SUBDIVISION 2. (Chaps. ii., iii.)

The Messages to the Churches.

SECTION 1. (Chap. ii.)

General identity and unity to Thyatira in which it is more strongly asserted than ever, though division is then beginning, and a remnant being separated.

1. ¹ **T**O the ^mangel of the assembly in ^eEphesus write: These things saith he that ^oholdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who ^pwalketh in the midst of

cf. Rom. 14. 4. p ch. 1. 13; cf. Song 6. 11.

m cf. Matt. 18. 10. with Acts 12. 15. cf. ver. 7 with 1 Cor. 10. 15 and 1 Cor. 14. 37.

n cf. Acts 19. 1. etc. cf. Acts 20. 17, etc. cf. Eph. 1. 1 o ch. 1. 16, 20.

significance which has been elsewhere given it, represents a stage in the Church's declension; the vessel which carries him, but as a prisoner, being bound first for the shores of Asia, "the miry land,"—that is, as it would seem, the significance of the name—the Church being mired with the world; how soon, in fact, that came to be its condition! Ephesus itself was, as we know, the church to which the apostle addressed that epistle which gives us the doctrine of the Church itself; not its earthly, but its heavenly character. The highest truth of Christian position, the wonderful character of the Church as the body of Christ, the house of God, and again the spouse of the Lord Jesus, is developed in it. The saints were yet in their first brightness here, and the apostle's heart was free to give them that which he could not minister to the Corinthians or to the Hebrews, being checked by their condition. It is, therefore, most significant that we find just *Ephesus* here characterized by the beginning of departure from the Lord, the beginning of all real departure, wherever it exists. Ephesus is characterized now by first love left, and as a consequence the first works also. The two things go necessarily together. Ephesus means "desirable," or "object of desire;" and this may speak of that which makes the picture sadly perfect. It is the Church, the object of the Lord's love, which is leaving the first freshness of its love to Him. This is what makes the whole address so significant. It is not, as many have supposed, that Ephesus is here first addressed as being the metropolitan church of Asia; for the Church in the beginning knew nothing of metropolitanism, and had to be degraded from heaven to earth to bear thus the stamp of earth. Political rank has no place in spiritual things; and if men point to Jerusalem, as they would, and to what they are pleased to designate as the first council there (Acts xv.), they only show by this how they have got back to Judaism, and are confounding thereby the earthly with the heavenly.

In the book of Acts we have had necessarily before us that asserted council which we have no need to deny having been such, but with a very different result from that which is sought to be deduced from it. The appeal is certainly made there, on the part of the Gentiles, to Jerusalem; and not only so, but the apostle Paul speaks of going up by revelation there (Gal. ii.); so that it was of God that there should be this appeal: but for what purpose? In order that at Jerusalem itself the hold of Jerusalem upon the people of God might be broken, and the Church set free! Nothing could possibly be so effectual as to make *Jerusalem itself set aside what was claimed to be her own jurisdiction*; and thus it is that in the letter which goes out from thence at this time, it is put as what seemed good "to the Holy Spirit and to us;" not to the Holy Spirit in us or by us, but the Holy Spirit having, as Peter argues, in fact already settled the matter by the bringing in of Cornelius and others with him; Jerusalem had nothing further to do than to profess its subjection to what the Spirit had already done. This is the plain matter of fact, as the whole history demonstrates, and it settles definitely the question of the Spirit of God making known His mind through councils of the Church—the mischief which men inexcusably have made out of this. The metropolitan character of Ephesus, as asserted by tradition, grows naturally out of its actual political place at that time; and when politics began to influence the Church, it became perfectly natural that Ephesus should have

the seven golden lampstands:—I know thy works and thy labor, and thine endurance, and that thou canst

q vers. 9, 13, 19, etc.
cf. Jno. 2. 25.
r cf. Gal. 5. 6. s ctr. Matt. 13. 21; ctr. Gal. 5. 7.

the spiritual place answering to its political one. Scripture itself knows nothing of all this. There is in it the Church at large, and the churches (or assemblies); but the Church at large consists, *not* of churches, but of individuals. The body of Christ has members, and nothing else. Yet there are churches, assemblies, which in each place, in the original condition of things, was but the one assembly in that place—everywhere the assembly of God represented in those who might be gathered together there. The local assembly represented in this way, of necessity, the assembly as a whole, but it was no distinct body. The only *body* was the body of Christ. There cannot be *bodies* of Christ, but only the body. The local assembly in this way owed all that was distinctive in it to mere locality. The assembly as a whole, scattered as it is over the world, cannot, therefore, *assemble*; the actual assembly must of necessity be local. But it was thus at the same time no separate body, and could not be so without an independence being asserted by this, which in Scripture at least is never thought of.

A quotation from a commentary of recent date, and which is in its character much beyond the ordinary, may yet show us how far from the scriptural view Christians have in general departed—"The gospel everywhere speaks of a calling and an election, and the Church is the organized society of the called and elected. It is the assembly or community of those whom God has called out from the world into a common fellowship of faith, hope, and obedience, and which is preserved and perpetuated by means of functions and services included in the call. And wherever there is a company of such as have received and believed the gospel, organized into one body, in the charge of one authorized minister, and coming together in the same stated services, there is a true church; and such societies were the seven assemblies."

How strange the contradiction here! First of all, we have what is perfectly true, that "the Church is the organized society of the called and elected." Who has organized it? He, certainly, who formed it. How is it formed? "By one Spirit," answers the apostle, "we are all baptized into one body." How is the baptism of the Spirit conferred? By man's hands or what? Certainly according to Scripture it is as when, in that sample case which decided things for them in the council at Jerusalem, the Spirit fell upon Cornelius and those with him, as they heard in faith the word of God which was preached to them. He who admits into the body of Christ is thus Christ Himself and no other. But we are told now that, "Wherever there is a company of such as have received and believed the gospel, *organized into one body*," there is a true church. Is this, then, a body, an organism distinct from the general organization, the body at large? Scripture has certainly no such thought anywhere. The body of Christ is in each place as represented by the members there; but there is, as the apostle declares and as the necessity of the case shows, one body alone. The definition is rendered still more unscriptural by the addition that in order to be a true church it must be "in the charge of one authorized minister." Where shall we find the scripture for this? The same writer will not himself venture to produce for it the angels of the churches, but distinctly disallows this. Where else has he found it? Where else can any one find it to-day? It is a thing, no doubt, of old date and which is accepted apparently because of what is thought its reasonableness, and much more because of its antiquity. Scripture is absolutely against it everywhere, and the assumption of it has been the cause of untold disaster in the Church at large. We shall find it shortly stigmatized by the Lord Himself under the title of Nicolaitanism. In the body, the Lord Himself has set the members, with gifts corresponding in each case to the place He has given these. Every member is thus responsible to know his place, and responsible for the use of the gift which that place implies. The Head over all is

not 'bear evil men; and thou hast "tried those who say that they are apostles and are not, and hast found

*t. chr. ver. 15.
chr. 2 Cor.
11. 20.*

u. cf. Gal. 1. 8, 9; 1 Jno. 4. 1; 2 Cor. 11. 13.

Christ Himself. The Spirit uniting all in subjection to the Head is the Spirit of Christ. It is of the first importance that the conscience here should be before God alone, and that there should be none to dictate as to how or by whom the ministry everywhere is to be determined and regulated. The voice of God must be free everywhere to reach His people, and there must be no order of things which will shut it out, by whomsoever He may please to minister. Must not necessary disaster result from the interposition here of that "one authorized minister" (by whom authorized?) who is to have charge of the whole?

The church at Ephesus comes first, then, here, not because of any metropolitan position that it had, but simply because of the truth which was committed to it,—that truth to which, alas, it is beginning to be untrue. The condition of Ephesus, in fact, stands for the condition of the Church universal from that time to the present. Whatever may be said for individuals, when has the Church gone back to its first love? And that is the root of the whole matter here.

But what then is this angel of the assembly in Ephesus to whom the apostle is directed to write? It is natural enough with the thoughts that fill our minds to-day, to think of some official who presided over it, and, as we know, it has been sought to make of him either a diocesan bishop, or at any rate such a minister as is almost universal in the present day. It is the angel who is, in fact, looked at as responsible for the condition of things indicated. It is the angel who is therefore rebuked or exhorted. Who is represented here if there be no such official? To this, Scripture in general answers clearly that the word of God is always addressed to the assembly itself, and in no wise to its officials, whatever these might be. Philippi has its bishops and deacons, but it is not either to bishops or deacons that the apostle writes his letter, but "to the saints in Christ Jesus" who are there—to all the saints, along with these. At Ephesus itself, where we know there were bishops, Paul yet writes to "the saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus," and the bishops have in the epistle no peculiar place at all.

In the epistle to the Romans, the address is in the same way "to all that be in Rome beloved of God, called saints;" and to the Corinthians, to whom he speaks of the special order of the Church on earth, it is, "Paul unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them which are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours." There is not, in fact, a hint anywhere of such a responsibility on the part of any officials for the state of the Church as would be indicated, according to the common way of thinking, in the epistles of Revelation. We need not consider the dream of some, that the angels here were literal angels, "guardian" as they are called. This is only, if possible, more baseless than the ordinary thought. Whatever be the truth with regard to the angel, it is most certain that every one that has an ear to hear is called to hear "what the Spirit saith," not to officials, but "to the assemblies;" and is there not just here a key to the meaning of the angel symbol? Revelation is a book of symbols, as is indicated in the opening of it, and as ought to be plain to all who read it; and therefore we need not wonder so much at a symbol here. It has been thought that as "angel" just means "messenger," and is applied to others than the heavenly messengers, there might have been messengers sent to the apostle from these different assemblies, and that it is these which he is called to address thus. This is a possibility, although there is no proof of it that we can find. Nevertheless, if such a thing could be admitted, it would make this clear how the assembly could be addressed in its angel or messenger without in any wise resigning its responsibilities as such. The address to the

them "liars; and thou hast "endurance and hast borne
for my "name's sake, and hast not wearied. But I

v cf. 1 Jno. 2.
22.

w cf. Rom.

2. 7. x cf. 3 Jno. 7; cf. Acts 5. 41; cf. Heb. 12. 1-3.

angel would be, in fact, an address to a representative of the assembly; the assembly would be addressed in him. This is, at any rate, a view of the matter which commends itself far more than the common thought; but we must nevertheless take into account what has been said already as to the angel before the addresses begin. The seven stars, says the Lord "are the angels of the seven assemblies, and the seven lampstands are the seven assemblies." There is a difference surely, as there is a connection also here. The lampstands were on earth, with responsibilities inferred of giving light there; but that light might, as we know, sadly fail, while, on the other hand, the star as the true heavenly light could hardly do so. Now if we consider the double aspect of the assembly which these addresses so thoroughly enforce, the responsible, actually existing assembly on the one hand, the assembly positionally and by profession, and on the other hand, the true people of God who soon cease to be identical with the profession as a whole, but among whom alone there could be found an ear to hear the voice that was speaking,—does it not seem plain that it is these latter for whom the angel stands? If the superscription of the epistles is to the angel of the assembly, the *subscription*, as we may say, is to him that hath an ear to hear. These, therefore, seem to be the same; and everything would agree with this. Here alone is the heavenly, real light. Here are the stars that shine in the darkness of the night. Here are those who can be considered responsible, and addressed with full urgency of this responsibility by the Lord.

Thus, on the whole, we may conclude that here is the truth as to the angels of the churches, all the more because it does not affirm any official representatives such as can nowhere else be found in Scripture, and that it does bring, as all Scripture does, the responsibility home to every individual heart, whatever may be his place and his gift in the Church of God. Let us see, then, that our hearts are awake to respond to the voice that calls us here, not merely a voice which called to those in Ephesus or Smyrna or the rest of the assemblies, but which calls us, every one of us, and with more fulness and emphasis then ever, at the present day.* To the assembly in Ephesus the Lord presents Himself as "the One who holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." It is evident that the characteristics here are more general than special. It is what the Lord is for all His people. The heavenly light is sustained by the Lord Himself.† The lampstands speak of responsibility; Christ walks in the midst of them to ascertain their condition. In Israel, as we know, it was the duty of the priest morning and evening to put in order the lamps upon the golden candlestick. Here the general thought is, on the one hand, of power that can always be reckoned upon; on the other hand, of human responsibility.

The Lord, as always in these addresses, speaks first of what He can approve. It is His desire to approve and justify, and the consciousness of approval puts the soul into the right place to receive also the warnings and the reproof which love in its very faithfulness must give. He begins here with the works, the practical test of everything, which we find emphasized in John's own epistle. He does not pronounce upon the works, but what they connect with here implies at least a measure of approbation. They had not only works, they labored.

* This view is borne out by the use of the term "angel" to designate the spirit as contrasted with the body, as in the passages noted in the references. Peter's angel was his spirit, and they supposed that he had been put to death. Thus the angel of the Church would be the spirit of the Church, that which was really united to Christ as contrasted with its body, that which *professed* to be it. In this way the angel stands for all there is of God in a company of people—not exactly the spiritual, but all who have life.—S. R.

† As has been already said, Ephesus represents the state of the entire Church ever since the time of the apostles. Loss of first love is what has characterized it. Hence the appropriateness of our Lord presenting Himself as in connection with the whole Church, as described in the first chapter, rather than in any specific way.—S. R.

have against thee that thou hast left thy ^ufirst love.
Remember therefore from ^w whence thou hast fallen,

^y cf. 1 Pet

1. 8.

¹ cf. Jer. 2. 2.

cf. Gal. 3. 1-4; cf. Ezek. 16. 8. ^z cf. Ps. 42. 4.

If it is faith that sets to work and gives character to the working, it is love that labors; so to the Thessalonians the apostle speaks of the "work of faith and labor of love." The labor here implies that it went as far as weariness; not spiritual, of course, but that the labor was real and hard. This might readily exhaust the strength, and bring the labor to an end; but here it was sustained, enduring; and that was in Thessalonians the characteristic of hope. Hope has in it, as we know, the spirit of endurance. Let hope decline, there is no longer energy for this. Thus faith, love, hope, have their proper place here;* but there is more than this. Endurance itself may end sometimes in tolerance of that which is to be endured. At Ephesus they could not bear evil men. There was no tolerance in this way. There was no lessening of evil in their eyes by the having to meet it constantly. They had met it, in fact, as it was making the highest pretensions. They had had to try those who said they were apostles, and were not. How remarkable to find so early such a pretension! They had not been daunted by it, but had tested and found them liars. Already we have an intimation of what was soon to come in. There are, as we know, presumed successors of the apostles at the present time. Paul has taught us in his own case how God has broken through that thought of succession, and that an apostle must produce his credentials direct from heaven. There is no thought anywhere in Scripture of succession to such an office. A succession to Peter himself, as the first of the apostles, was beyond even the height of the pretension here, and God has sufficiently guarded against it. Thus Paul it is who receives both the gospel in its fulness and the truth of the Church in its full character, and takes Peter himself to task for conduct that was inconsistent with this. Peter here disappears from the history, while Paul is the instrument of the Spirit, taken up and presented to us in the Acts, with whom the character and success, or otherwise, of Christian doctrine is henceforth identified; but men are easily daunted by a high pretension, and fear irreverence too much in questioning that which comes in such a way. At Ephesus as yet they had not feared to question. Already, therefore, there was that in the Church itself which would rightly awaken alarm for what was coming in; but they had endured and borne, and for Christ's name's sake too; and as to spiritual energy had not wearied.

All thus far is plain commendation then. How strange and solemn that with all this there was yet a worm at the root which might destroy it all! "But I have against thee," the Lord adds, "that thou hast left thy first love." There is no "somewhat," as in our common version. It is not put as if this could be a little thing; and this is the more striking because afterwards, where we find that when evil had grown much beyond what we have here, the Lord does speak of it as "somewhat." Thus to Pergamos He says, "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there those that hold the doctrine of Balaam;" but we should say, and rightly say, that that was a *great* thing. Here, on the other hand, Ephesus hates the works of the Nicolaitans, who were only the beginning, as we shall see, of that Balaam evil. Yet the Lord cannot say "somewhat" here. The evil had not yet outwardly appeared at all. It was the Lord alone, as we may say, who could detect the actual decline which had taken place. But this beginning of decline is, after all, the great thing. Were there no beginning, there could be no fruit such as follows afterwards; and the loss of first love here is that which touches most nearly the heart of Him to whom Ephesus is an "object of desire." Love seeks love that shall answer to it, and the stronger the love that seeks, the more is every failure to find it realized. Here

* But is it not significant that neither faith, hope nor love are mentioned here? The *works* of these were present, produced indeed by them, but with a loss of spiritual energy suggested by the absence of the first love; the motive power has also been lost, and significantly it is not mentioned, suggesting at least its decline.—S. R.

and repent, and do the "first works; but if not, I am coming unto thee, and will ^bremove thy lampstand out

a cf. Heb. 6. 10.
cf. Heb. 10. 32-34; *cf.* Acts 4. 34, 35. *b* cf. Lev. 14. 43-45; *cf.* ch. 3. 16.

was in fact, the beginning of all the long history of evil;—first love was already gone; not *love*, of course, but the first freshness and fullness of it. What characterizes first love is evidently full satisfaction with the object of it; and here is what Christ must be to the soul that knows Him. The knowledge of the new man is, "Christ is all;" and when He has ceased to be all for the soul, the anchor of the soul has slipped. How far one may drift after that, is an open question. Christ, we know, will not be unfaithful; and if He goes after that which is lost until He find it,—if we have all been found when we were lost,—the love that was towards us then will never leave us. But, as far as we are concerned, how far the soul may drift we cannot say, except that, of course, it cannot be into apostasy. But the loss of first love affects everything. Then the "first works" are of necessity gone with it, and so the Lord speaks here: "Remember from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works;" for the soul that is no longer finding full satisfaction in Christ must of necessity seek to supplement Him in some way, and must of necessity seek this in that which only increases the uneasiness.* There will be need still more and more of finding that which never can be found. Christ all, to the soul, is fullness of satisfaction. With Christ alone, we cannot fail of entire happiness. But Christ supplemented by something else is Christ dishonored, and thus we find a famine in our own land, and are, as it were, driven down to Egypt perforce—a terrible thing for a Christian, when that which is really his own has thus waned in its power over him: when he has yet so much sense of what Christ is that he can no longer find in the world even what the worldling finds in it, and yet cannot find satisfaction in that which is his own either. Communion is lost, for there can be no proper communion with a dishonored Christ; and thus there is no true repentance for a soul until it has got back to the first condition.

There is solemn question for us all here, and we can see how this book of Revelation will search out our hearts! No proper servant can there be with a half-heart for Christ, and thus we can understand how we should have this set before us at the very entrance upon that which is addressed to the servant. Christ must have His place, not *a* place, but His own place; and if not, there will be no proper light for the world. The removal of the lampstand out of its place is naturally what comes of it.† The testimony of the Christian is that he has found an Object of satisfaction which the world has not found. When such an one seeks the world, the world itself knows well how to estimate this. When the objects that other men have become our objects, we may profess what we will as to Christ, but we shall only be the more false witnesses to Him by the very profession. It is a solemn thing to realize that a Christian cannot in this way really give up his place as witness, but he is a witness either for Christ or against Him. Identified with Christ as he is, the world turns necessarily to him to inquire what he has found in Christ. If he is seeking water at all the broken cisterns around him, there will be no need to say that, some way, that continual spring of which the Lord has spoken as in the soul of him that knows Him, is nevertheless failing. Thus the lamp which is lighted to go out to meet the Bridegroom, of necessity fails. It is not a question of doctrine, but of the heart; and we can no longer commend the doctrine when the heart is out of it. The con-

* Note that the Lord does not say "See to what," but "remember *from* what thou hast fallen." They were turned back, were not even to be unduly occupied with their present condition. This would enable them truly to measure the distance of their fall, and at the same time held out the means of their recovery.—S. R.

† Here again the warning is characteristic and significant. It is in keeping with the way in which our Lord presents Himself, as we saw. Holding the lights—the stars—in His hand, He has power to remove the very vessel of testimony. This really looks on to the end when the Church is set aside as in Laodicea. How solemnly thus the beginning and end of a course of departure from the Lord are brought together.—S. R.

of its place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the ^{c ver. 15.} Nicolaitans, which ^{chr. i Pet. 5.} ^{2, 3.} ^{cf. Matt. 24.} ^{49.}

dition here is just so much the more significant that there is no evil work spoken of; and how easily we satisfy ourselves with looking at our lives with a dull conscience which can recognize nothing particularly wrong, and from the world's point of view has nothing, in fact, to recognize. Spite of all this, there may already be at work that which has made distance between the soul and Christ, the very distance itself only making one less capable of estimating evil; recognizing it, no doubt, where natural conscience would, but nothing further. The natural conscience, merely, knows nothing of Christ; and how soon a Christian may get into a condition in which he too is content to judge much as the world judges, and thus does not accept the reproof which a moment with Christ would make him conscious of.

In fact, at Ephesus they had not yet departed far. Only they had had to turn from Him necessarily to depart at all. Yet the Lord closes here with words which once more have a certain commendation in them: "This thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." We shall find by and by a "doctrine of the Nicolaitans" which has come in. It is no doctrine that is yet spoken of. We may be sure, therefore, in spite of the commentators, that doctrine there is as yet none. Nicolaitanism is as yet something in the heart rather than the mind,—none the less evil indeed on that account, for it is through the heart that the mind is perverted, and we may remember how in the epistle to the Ephesians itself the apostle speaks of the eyes of their hearts being enlightened. The heart that is astray forms its doctrine to justify itself. The error of the heart becomes thus the error of the mind.

But what was this Nicolaitanism? We are referred by Church writers to a set of gnostics, who, if they existed, (which is doubtful,) could only have arisen after this. We are told, also, that what is here is simply Antinomianism; but there is no evidence at all to justify the statement. Any sect of Nicolaitans, known as such, it has been impossible to find; and it is evident, in fact, that whatever tradition may say in the matter is the fruit of the effort to find that which, from what is spoken here, was thought *must* have existed. How could the Lord speak of Nicolaitans if there were none? It is obvious He could not; but the question is, is the name simply historical, or is it symbolical—as all Revelation so manifestly is? The word means, as there can be no doubt whatever, "One who conquers (or gets the upper hand of) the people;" and the word for "people" here, "the *laos*," is that from which, significantly, has come "laity,"—a word never found in Scripture, but in common use everywhere. It is as plain as can be that there is no Christian laity in the New Testament; and that which is the opposite of it, which is in contrasted connection, the clergy, is not in Scripture either. The clergy, "*cleroi*," are, according to the name, those who are the Lord's lot, His peculiar portion. It is a term derived from the Old Testament and Judaism, where the Lord, however, was to be the lot in an especial way of those brought near to Him as the people at large were not—the priests and Levites. Nothing remains for us really to judge of what is here except that significant name. If we judge by it, "Nicolaitans" are a class who (themselves, of course, *not* laity) subject the Lord's people as laity to themselves. There is nothing necessarily immoral about them, and what is stated of them here cannot be rightly held to such an inference. They are not the Balaam-followers who in Pergamos are distinctly separated from them. We have, in fact, nothing that can more define them than the fact that they were Nicolaitans, whose "works" are first spoken of, and then their doctrine. If we are to judge by Scripture, (and we have positively nothing else to judge by,) then these who are not laity must be naturally clergy, a result which one would think would suggest itself to any mind. They are not yet in a positive place as such. There is no doctrine with regard to it. The Lord's people

I also ^dhate. He that hath an ^eear, let him hear what the ^fSpirit saith to the assemblies. To him that ^gover-
d cf. Matt. 18. 1-11.
 cf. Matt. 20.
 25-28. e ver. 11, etc; Matt. 13. 43; cfr. Matt. 13. 14, 15. f cf. 1 Tim. 4. 1. g ver. 11, etc; ch. 21. 7; cf. 1 Jno. 5. 4; cf. Rom. 8. 37; cf. 1 Cor. 15. 57; cf. 2 Cor. 2. 14.

have not been content as yet to take their place as in subjection, as laity, to any separate class of this kind. There are Nicolaitans in deeds, not yet in doctrine. There are people, we may say, who take, in fact, such a separate place, act as if they were in a nearness to the Lord which others have not, and that, we would say, officially. It may seem intensely strong, the condemnation of such in the Lord's words, "which I also hate." He does not, of course, say that He hates the *persons*, but their deeds; and when we realize what such things mean, when we realize how the whole character of the Church has been affected by them, we shall not, perhaps, wonder any more at the strength of such an expression.

God has given gifts to the Church. Christ gone up on high has given gifts to men. By the very fact of the Church being the body of Christ, gifts are implied (Rom. xii. 6), for each member must have its functions. This is what a "body" necessarily means. This is organization, and an organization of the Church is thus of God. It is in no wise left to man's arrangements. The gift is from God Himself, and the responsibility to use it results from the having it. Moreover, every member having its gift, there can be no separation of one from another in this way. There is, of course, diversity in the gifts themselves. Says the apostle, "He has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Some things here, moreover, are necessarily public in a way that others are not; but there is no special class who are beyond others "God's lot," or to whom beyond others God is their lot. Apostles and prophets laid the foundation. There remains for us only the work that they have accomplished: the foundation does not go all the way up the building. Evangelists, pastors and teachers remain. They are a continual necessity to the Church, and as this are continually being given. We are surely to thank God for His mercy in this way. But are not His chief mercies in our hands oftentimes the things most abused; the best things, capable of worst corruption? With all this we cannot find anywhere in Scripture what the quotation given awhile since makes necessary to the constitution of an assembly, the "authorized minister" who takes charge of it, who is to have in this way the laity subject to himself. Ministers are *servants*, as the apostle reminds the Corinthians, and belong to the saints and not the saints to them; and, moreover, there is not such an idea anywhere as any teacher being the exclusive teacher of an assembly, nor any pastor being the exclusive pastor of a flock which may thus be called *his* flock; and as to the evangelist, there needs no assertion that the evangelist is not the evangelist of an assembly, but one who in his very character goes out to the world with the message of life and death, by which souls are to be converted and the Church built up. These gifts are gifts which belong to a common treasury. They are given as common blessings to the whole Church of God. Being men, they are still imperfect and fallible, however qualified by the Spirit for their work, and as thus imperfect and dependent they are not set in solitary places to be all-sufficient even to two or three in any particular place, but as helpers to one another, helpers to the Church at large; they have everywhere their open field of blessed service with which no one can interfere without derogation to the authority of Christ Himself, who is alone their Master. The thought of even the fewest conceivable number of God's people being handed over to any one,—the most highly gifted that could be,—to minister to all their necessities, is not only, as it plainly is, entirely unspiritual, but it is the depriving of the Church at large of the use of gift which belongs to all, and the ready means by which the different assemblies become built up in errors naturally consequent upon such a state of things as this, where the defects of the individual are not compensated by that which is ordained of God for the correction of mere individualities, and the needful supply of that which the individual may be entirely incompetent to give.

cometh, will I give to eat of the ^atree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

h ch. 22. 2, 14,
19.
cfr. Gen. 2.
9; cfr. Gen. 3. 22.

The epistle to the Corinthians already shows us the natural growth of what we have here. At Corinth surely there was not, as to the whole, a state of first love. This is clear by what else was going on. Christ was being supplemented in various ways. The wisdom of the world was replacing the wisdom that was in Him; and in spite of their coming behind in no gift, they were at the same time, as the apostle tells them, carnal and even babes in Christ. In such a condition of things Nicolaitanism is the natural result; but we find its growth here not at first due to the assumption of individuals so much as to the condition of the saints as a whole, who were already forming themselves into schools of teaching with such or such a teacher as the leader of the school. They were saying, "I am of Paul and I of Apollos," and were thus making themselves disciples of men. They were coming to belong to those who in God's thought belonged to them. This is the very secret of Nicolaitanism—the people subjected to the one who leads them. It is evident that all that is needed now is for men to step into the places thus prepared for them. Consent is required on both sides before there can be what indeed did prevail at Corinth. Here Paul and Apollos were not those who could adapt themselves to the system forming; and in fact, as the apostle says, he only "in a figure transferred these things" to Apollos and himself. The actual leaders were far different ones; but it is easy to see how, with the worldliness which prevailed among them, such a system would necessarily find favor. The mass might devote themselves to their worldly occupations, assured that their interests would be better cared for by a class devoted to spiritual things, who could give their whole energies to them. It was only a most suitable division of labor in their eyes, and still commends itself to the mass everywhere as such. In Ephesus there were those who were ready to act this part, but the assembly at large refused it. Christ too refuses it with His whole heart. Here it was as yet scarcely even in its forming stage; but we shall by and by find it fully formed, and learn better with what it connects itself, and how sure a sign it is of declension from primitive Christianity.

It is here that the warning voice is heard, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the assemblies." There is need already of such an admonition as this, and let us notice that it is to the assemblies that the Spirit speaks, and it is the assembly that is to know, therefore, what the Spirit says. There is nowhere recognized an intermediate class which, if it existed, would be surely, rather, that which the Spirit would address; but all here is intensely individual. "He that hath an ear, let him hear" points out at once the overcomer and the need of overcoming, and the promise is connected with this: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God." There is to be an overcoming now in the Church of God itself, and thus no going with the multitude is possible. Each must be awake to his responsibility. He is addressed to be, in a right way, independent of circumstances, of the condition of those around him, dependent upon Christ alone. It is the voice of Christ to which the Spirit gives utterance. The promise itself carries us back, as we have seen it characteristic of Revelation to do, to the beginning; and yet not really to the old state of things as that would imply, but to that which lay hidden as a germ, nevertheless, in that primitive condition. Here is again the tree of life and paradise, but it is not Adam's paradise any more; it is the paradise of God; and the tree of life speaks of another life than what was Adam's naturally—life in dependence still, for that must necessarily be the condition of the creature, and while the life which we have is eternal life it is none the less dependent. It derives its stability from the One in whom the believer finds it. It is life *in Christ*, and thus abides for us beyond the power of anything within us or around to take away. Here it is the partaking of the fruits that is in question, of course, and we shall find these fruits at

² (8-11): Smyrna. The open assault and secret snare of the enemy. The synagogue of Satan.

² And to the angel of the assembly in Smyrna write: These things saith the ¹first and the last, who became ²dead, and ³liveth. I know thy ⁴tribulation and thy ⁵poverty, (but thou art ⁶rich); and the blasphemy of

¹ ch. 1.17, 18.
² cf. 1 Thess. 4. 14.
³ cf. 1 Cor. 15. 20.
⁴ cf. Jno. 16. 1.
⁵ cf. 2 Cor. 8. 9; cf.

33; cf. Ps. 142. 3; cf. Ps. 56. 8. *m ctr.* ch. 3. 17; Jas. 2. 5; cf. 2 Cor. 6. 10. *n cf.* 2 Cor. 8. 9; cf. Eph. 3. 8; cf. Phil. 4. 19.

the close of Revelation in the picture given us of the heavenly Jerusalem, where the tree of life yields its abundant fruitage continually, and unexhausted. The life itself we have, thank God, already; but the fruits of it, how little can we speak of these as yet! They remain to be known, as the promise here implies, when we are in the blessed scene to which the tree of life belongs.*

² We pass on now to the assembly at Smyrna, and here we find what is admitted on all hands to be a perfect representation of the Church in its early persecutions under the heathen emperors. The very name "Smyrna" speaks of this. It means "myrrh," the bitter but fragrant perfume with which they embalmed the dead, but which speaks, therefore, of a death which is not simply death, a death that is precious; that is, as it were, incense to God; for myrrh formed part of the incense which God commanded Israel to prepare, and "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." In such death there must be of necessity the promise of resurrection. We have here, then, the open assault of the enemy on the one hand: we have a much more successful snare even, because secret, of the enemy on the other. The two go suitably together. The roar of the lion is well suited to drive into the hidden snare; and here, in fact, was the preparation for what we shall find later in Pergamos, where the Church is now "dwelling where Satan's throne is," under the protection, as it were, of Satan himself. The Church assailed by the world is tempted to seek even to the world for defense against this. In compromise with it it will find deliverance from these open attacks,—yea, more than this, even a place and respectability in it, as at Corinth again they were all finding. They were "full," were "rich," had reigned as kings, anticipating the time when the saints indeed shall reign, and losing by this anticipation the fellowship of those who were, as Paul says, set forth even as men appointed to death.

To the angel of the assembly in Smyrna the Lord writes with sympathetic encouragement as "the First and the Last," the One beyond all human changes, and abiding with all the preciousness of this at all times for His saints. Nevertheless, He is one who has been in death and come out of it. They have but to follow Him to find how fully the way is prepared for them through death itself, and that truest life which is beyond it. He recognizes, then, the tribulation in which for His sake they were, and the poverty in a worldly sense which suited well a state of spiritual riches. The words here are in commendation, not such as we shall find addressed to Laodicea at the close. In Laodicea they too were rich, they had grown rich; but not with such riches as Christ could recognize. For Him, although they knew it not, they were the wretched and miserable, the poor and blind and naked. Here, while He recognizes the poverty in which they were at Smyrna, it is He Himself who reminds them of how rich, nevertheless, they are.

The next words here are in question as to their application. By most "the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not" is taken to refer to the well known, constant enmity of the unbelieving nation against the followers of the Messiah whom they had rejected. They are spoken of evidently here as if outside those whom the Lord is addressing. Nor is the angel charged with responsibility for their presence. They thus might easily be understood to be entirely outside Christianity, enemies and nothing else; especially as we know

* The promise to the overcomer is in keeping with the general character of the state described, while of course divinely suited to that state. To partake of the tree of life is the common portion of all the Church, and the special contrast with that loss of first love which the believer is to overcome.—S. R.

those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are a
 "synagogue of Satan." "Fear not what thou art about

Acts 15. 1, etc. *p* cf. 2 Cor. 11. 14, 15 with Matt. 16. 22, 23; *cf.* Gal. 1. 8. *q* Isa. 43. 1, 2; *cf.* Jno. 16. 33.

o ch. 3. 9.
cf. Gal. 6. 12,
 13 with

from the history in the Acts itself how thoroughly the Jewish opposers, stirred by the Gentiles against the growing Church, as in the case of Paul himself, were thus largely the authors of Gentile persecution. Nevertheless, if the matter were so simple an one, it is evident that it becomes by so much less significant in such an address as the present. Moreover, as we look at the words, it is hard to understand them of those who were in some sense (however little they were in God's sight such) Jews, really the seed of Abraham after the flesh, however little partakers of his spirit. Nor can we understand the need that they would have for asserting what they were in this way. A Jew was very evidently a Jew, and had his acknowledged status as such in the Roman empire. Again, if these words do not speak of it, then it is certain that what was one of the most striking features in the Church's decline is wholly omitted in what we have here, which, certainly, is just the place in which we might expect to find it.

Judaism was not simply an external evil to the Church at the beginning. It was, as we know, from the very beginning that which threatened really its existence according to the constitution God has given it. This was the matter which the assembly at Jerusalem had to consider—the question whether the Gentiles were under the law or no. For a moment and so far, this was decided in that letter in which it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to them to put upon the Gentiles no such burden as was sought to be imposed. The principle here went much further than the letter itself actually did, for if the burden of the law which, as the apostle says, neither they nor their fathers were able to bear was not to be imposed upon the Gentile, then how could it be left upon the Jew? The Church is one. In it there is neither Jew nor Greek, and, as Paul writes to the Galatians, those who were justified, as all were necessarily, apart from the law ("for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"), could not after this rightly return and put themselves under that law which had thus already been set aside for them. Thus the question might seem decided; but it was not really so, and the Judaizing Church we see beginning in that epistle to the Galatians, in which the apostle speaks after this manner. The Galatians were Gentiles, and not Jews at all. They had received God's grace, and the Spirit as the fruit of that grace—a gift which Judaism had not for its proselytes; and yet those who had begun in the Spirit were now seeking, as he tells them, to be made perfect in the flesh, and going back to carnal ordinances.

In the epistle to the Colossians we find the apostle meeting also tendencies of this nature, where he tells them that the handwriting, or obligation, of ordinances, which was against them and contrary to them, Christ had taken out of the way, nailing it to His cross. They were not to be judged, therefore, with regard to a sabbath, or the meats and drinks of Judaism.

The epistle to Timothy speaks still more decisively of those who, in the Church though they were, were seeking to be teachers of the law, not understanding, as he says, what they were saying—the terrible consequences which would ensue from this. But thus the struggle with Judaism was not a mere outside one, but one which in the Church itself had its fullest significance. It was now, in fact, that in which the attack of the enemy upon the grace of the gospel was most apparent, and the Church itself became changed, not merely in outward form, but in the whole spirit of it, into a mere continuation of what men speak of still as the Jewish Church—no doubt with added privileges, and a certain freedom from the regard of Jewish observances, but still rather the heir of the earthly Jerusalem than that which is above, "our mother." If it is impossible, as it is indeed impossible, that so mighty and significant a change could be overlooked, then we may well realize the strength of the language of the Lord here, which characterizes the party identified with the introduction of such a change as men who said they were Jews and were not, but were "the synagogue of Satan."

We could not expect that the assembly would be branded as this. The Lord could not do so. Yet, as we look at what is here, we cannot but see how thoroughly the change which steadily went on is marked for us. The synagogue was, of course, the name of the Jewish assembly, and exactly characterized it. It was not, in the Christian sense, an assembly, an "*ecclesia*," a people called out of the world and separate from it, but simply "a gathering together," as "*synagogue*" means, indefinite and promiscuous, believers and unbelievers confounded in it, as in fact was the case in Judaism. The thing sought thus to be introduced, synagogue instead of *ecclesia*, would be manifestly *Satan's* synagogue—that which the adversary was setting up in opposition to the truth. For Judaism introduced into Christianity can no longer be the Judaism that once was. It is impossible to recall that. When God gave it, it was, of course, for the time being, according to God; it was something, as the apostle says of the law, which came in by the way as a schoolmaster until the time that faith should have distinctly taken its place as God's principle, the only principle that He can recognize. Thus "Christ died," says the apostle John, "for that nation" (of Israel); "and not for that nation only, but also that He might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." The Jewish system necessarily scattered these. It did not own the children of God as such. It did not distinguish them in Israel from those who were not such, and those that were outside of Israel it did not recognize at all. Now the principle is, as was proclaimed to Cornelius, that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." This, of course, could only be the work of divine grace, and the principle itself is, as we see in the case of Cornelius, the setting aside of Judaism.

But thus manifestly also the mixed congregation which Judaism tolerated could not be brought into that nearness to God which faith alone could claim; and there being no distinct separation, those that were true children of God must accept the distance which alone was possible in the case of the others. Thus it should be plain what the introduction of a Jewish system into the Church would signify for the Church. The law could not justify. It was intended to condemn, and could rightly do nothing else than this. Could it have done so, it would not have answered the purpose for which God gave it. But thus, as the law could not justify, believers under it could never enjoy that justification which it is now the privilege of every saint to know, assuredly, as the foundation of everything for him. In fact—how soon! Paul's doctrine being left behind, (for he alone it is who distinctly speaks of justification) this came into corresponding uncertainty among professing Christians. For centuries, until the Reformation, justification by faith was known only—and even then scarcely with perfect clearness—by a few scattered if not hunted souls, buried in a mass of mere profession in which the old conditions of Judaism were necessarily found once more.

But again: the knowledge of justification lacking, meant, of course, the impossibility of distinguishing the true Church from the false. The true Church became, as people have even now to say, the *invisible* Church, and with every one it became a question of how to gather the best way he could the indications of his faith. He had, according to the way the apostle's words are quoted, to "examine himself whether he was in the faith and prove his own self." On the other hand, it became the part of charity to exclude as few as possible from the possibility of being what they professed. Sacraments came in thus to give a kind of certainty which was else lacking. Baptism was "for the remission of sins." It was plainly easy for any to determine for himself whether or not he was baptized, much easier than to prove satisfactorily his conversion. Thus the great stress came to be laid on baptism. In it God's grace could be emphasized in the fullest way, and even a Chrysostom could say, "Although a man should be foul with every vice, the blackest that could be named, yet should he fall into the baptismal pool, he ascends from the divine waters purer than the beams of noon." It is quite true that, in the face of what these baptized Christians

to suffer. Behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall

*r. cf. Acts 12.
1, 2.
cf. Dan. 3.
15-18.*

very frequently turned out to be, it was impossible to think of a salvation for them eternally, as Scripture makes it. The doctrine as to this was necessarily, therefore, soon lost; and while thus Chrysostom could say again that with baptism "are connected all the benefits of heirship and the community of interests with the family" (of God), yet to fall after baptism became not only possible doctrinally, but had abundant examples pleaded in proof. How to find their way back in this case to the condition they had lost was the problem then. It was manifestly much more difficult to find forgiveness of sins once more after having lost it. Here penances and what not naturally came in to give a measure of ease to the conscience, while priestly absolution represented, on the other side, once more, divine grace; and thus a hope, somewhat indefinite, no doubt, could be gained or regained at last by almost any. With this the power of the Church, that is to say, what practically stood for it now, the clergy, grew apace.

The inheritance from Judaism is in all this plainly to be seen, only it was now a Judaism far more pretentious than that of old, and thus very different in character. In Judaism the ceremonies plainly pointed onwards to what was still to come. In many ways their inefficacy for true salvation was made manifest; while, on the other hand, in the Judaized Christianity now coming in, that which had before been only pointed to was asserted to have come. Christ the Saviour had plainly come, and this being all the salvation that He had wrought, it was all the salvation that any could look for. The darkness was no longer the darkness of men who were waiting in hope for the daybreak. It was a darkness this side of eternity little relieved. Those most careless might hope most easily. Those realizing more what sin was would come more completely under the power of the priestly system which had now become the Church itself, but against which, none the less, the awakened conscience pleaded, spite of all that could be done to assure it. Who that will contemplate all this (which is only the statement of what was undeniably the doctrine of what assumed to be the Catholic Church for centuries) but must realize the truth of the title given by the Lord to those who introduced it, of "the synagogue of Satan." It is not meant, of course, that the Church became this, at whatever time in her history and amid all the darkness we are called to contemplate her. The Lord would make a difference, and teach us to make a corresponding difference therefore, between the teachers and the taught, those who introduced the system and those who came into it as a sad inheritance left them by their fathers—Scripture itself more or less kept from them, with only enough pleaded from it to put the Church in the authority sought for it, as in that clipped quotation, "Hear the Church;" the word of God being thus made to sanction its own abandonment, and to deliver up souls to the most enormous imposture that the world has ever seen.

But we are going on beyond where we have yet arrived, in the period which Smyrna characterizes, and the Lord's words here would teach us that not without a struggle was all this accomplished. Indeed, Church history alone assures us (and that by comparison with Scripture) of the fact of the accomplishment. For it, of course, it was no transformation, but professedly Christianity as it came from the Lord and the apostles. That there was no struggle against it is impossible to be believed, and it is to this that the words here plainly point. The "blasphemy," or slander, of the Jewish party accordingly had been directed against those who have the Lord's commendation here. Here we must remember that the making of history has been in the hands of what, according to this, would be the triumphant party; and we can hardly expect that, this being so, we should have in it, in any wise as it was, the true account of the matter. It was an age in which men did not hesitate to forge the names of those who were in repute to spurious documents, and even with the express design of giving authority to some favorite doctrine. Scripture itself is decisive as to the

have tribulation ten days. Be thou ³faithful unto death, and I will give thee the ²³'crown of life. He that hath an ^{cf. Mk. 13. 13.}ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies. He that ^{2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.}overcometh shall in no wise be hurt of the second death. ^{Jas. 1. 12. u ver. 7. etc.}

v ch. 20. 6-14; ch. 21. 8.

rapid departure from Paul, while, of course, his name was held in becoming honor; yet his own words as to what was taking place in this very Asia, at the time he wrote his last epistle, give us more than a hint of what was going on; while at Rome there was already a state of things which would clearly allow of such departure. Solemn it is to realize the completeness of it at so early a date as we are forced to do, but it is only in the order of things with regard to anything entrusted to man from the beginning. How long did our first parents live in Paradise? What has been the constant record of succeeding generations? The history of the ancient people of God closes with the decisive rejection of the Son of the Father sent to them in divine love; and in the Church, with all the additional blessings which God had made its own, we must yet not wonder if history repeats itself. From Paul himself we know that "the mystery of iniquity" was already at work, and that the final issue would be an apostasy, out of which would rise that "man of sin" who is destroyed only by the breath of the Lord, and consumed in the brightness of His coming.

We thus find in Smyrna a second stage of the decline. The Church was seeking to make terms with the world. God in mercy was suffering them, on the other hand, to find what was the world's essential opposition to the grace of which they were witnesses. It was, alas, for the mass ineffectual, as we know, and the Church, come out of her ten days' tribulation prophesied here, came out of it only to clasp hands with the world in full reality.* It is to the suffering, not to the reigning Church that the Lord is speaking; and we need not wonder that to her His words are full only of encouragement and assurance: "Be thou faithful unto death" He could say to those who were thus in fellowship with Him in His rejection; "I will give thee the crown of life." The resurrection of the saint would be, in fact, such a crown of life to these sufferers, the eternal life which was already theirs manifesting itself in supremacy over death, through the power of Him who had vanquished it for them, and who will, as the apostle expresses it in the epistle to the Romans, "reign in life by the One, Christ Jesus." His encouragement to the overcomer is similar in character to this: "He that overcometh shall in no wise be hurt of the second death." He is not here using, as we shall find Him doing presently, "the sharp sword with two edges," but rather applying His own sweet balm for the wounds inflicted by the enemy. He puts alongside of the death which some of them are to suffer the awful darkness of the second death, only to say, You have escaped entirely from this, how light a thing, then, is the other!†

2. As we pass into the second section now, we find the evil threatening become a positive fact, and the Church more openly slipped away from Christ and

* The "ten days" persecutions spoken of here are no doubt symbolic, as so much else is in this book. Ten is the number which speaks of the full measure of responsibility. Thus their persecution will be only up to that measure. God would not suffer them to be tried above what they were able to bear—such as was "common to man." This would apply both to the local assembly and to that period of the Church's history which it symbolized. It has been sought to identify these ten days with ten specific times of persecution under the Roman Emperors, but it is difficult and needless to attempt this. In like manner, reference has been made to the ten plagues in Egypt; doubtless the only connection is in the significance of the number in each case.—S. R.

† It is needless to say that life, while spoken of here as a crown, is not in any sense earned by the faithful. It is the gift of God, but in connection with that gift is the reward, not distinguished from it. So too the promise to the overcomer. All believers do overcome and none shall be hurt of the second death. For those, however, who have passed through the Smyrna persecutions there will be special significance in that escape. They might be called to pass through the first death, might incur all the malice and rage of man, but that which God inflicts they will forever escape.—S. R.

2 (12-29):
The
enemy's
alliance;
seduction

and idolatry spreading and growing more evil.

2. ¹ And to the angel of the assembly in Pergamos write:—These things saith he that hath the "sharp two-edged sword. I know where thou ² dwellest, where

¹ (12-17): Pergamos dwelling where Satan's throne is.

1v ch. 1. 16.
ver. 16.
Heb. 4. 12.
x cf. Lk. 21.
35.
cf. ch. 3. 10.
cf. ch. 17. 8.

from subjection to His Word, accepting the enemy's alliance; and here again we have two stages. In the first, at Pergamos, they are dwelling where Satan's throne is. They have accepted, consciously or not, a place in what is his kingdom, in that world whose prince is not Christ, but the adversary of Christ. The consequences are marked and many, as we would expect; but there is still a second stage to follow, in which a more pretentious form appears. The name of Jezebel is connected with the old Jewish history in such a manner as to stamp the woman here without any question; all the more because she assumes, nevertheless, to be a prophetess, and to teach by divine authority. We have had in the parables of the thirteenth of Matthew the woman, in just such connection, introducing the leaven into the meal which is in her hands—the pure doctrine of Christ committed to the Church. Here is certainly in Thyatira the same thing, only more openly done; and from this point, as we look back at Pergamos, we can realize that we have there also one of the parables of Matthew exemplified. The parable of the least of all seeds becoming a tree precedes that of the leaven, as Pergamos here precedes Thyatira; and in that tree—the evident type of the Church rooted in the earth and becoming a worldly power—the birds of the air lodge in the branches. The Lord Himself has interpreted this for us in the parable preceding, where they take away the good seed sown by the wayside; and the Lord refers this to Satan taking away from men what is sown in the heart. Now the tree shelters that which does this—again a picture which in Revelation is given from another side, in which the features are more developed, as we have seen is the case also with Thyatira. In both stages that are before us here the power of Satan manifest is unmistakable.

¹ Pergamos succeeds, then, to Smyrna, and now we find what surely has fullest meaning for us, that He who addresses it reminds them that He has the sharp "two-edged sword." There is reference to this also in the address itself. The Lord is using His Word here as that which is "living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow;" but it is a Word which will come out in the end, as we find in the nineteenth chapter, as a Word of most positive judgment upon all His adversaries. There is no encouragement at all in such an appeal as this, but we shall find, all the more, a sweeter encouragement for the overcomer before the close. The darker the night, the more His stars will shine in it; and we know that He holds them in His hand all through. But there is now no more the blasphemy of adversaries of which He spoke to Smyrna. It is the actual state of the assembly itself with which He is concerned. Yet this is put in a way which presents precisely such a difficulty as only enables us to see the more the prophetic character and real power of what is in it. They are addressed as dwelling where Satan's throne is; and immediately it is added, in a way which seems to be commendation, that they hold fast Christ's name, and have not denied His faith, even in the days (martyr days now passed) in which Antipas His faithful witness was slain among them, "where Satan dwelleth." Thus it may seem as if, after all, here was, on the whole, a good state to be commended. Their dwelling where Satan's throne was would seem their misfortune more than their fault; and the whole matter becomes, for those who see no more than the actual Pergamos, a mystery scarcely to be understood. Trench even says, in speaking of Pergamos, "Why it should have thus deserved the name of 'Satan's throne,' so emphatically repeated a second time at the end of this verse,—'where Satan dwelleth,'—must remain one of the unsolved riddles of these epistles." We may allow that it remains thus a proof of how incompetent a merely local rendering is to explain what has in fact much larger and deeper application. It is somewhat bold, and for one like Trench, to assure us that if he has

Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain

y cf. Matt. 4. 8, 9 with Jno. 14. 30. *z* ch. 3. 8. ver. 25.

a cf. 2 Tim. 2. 12; *c* cf. Matt. 10. 33. *b* cf. Jno. 15. 27 with Jno. 16. 2; Heb. 12. 4.

not solved the mystery in question, it is destined to remain unsolved; but if so, the Lord's exhortation to us to keep the things that are written in this book must remain, in this respect, without any possibility of fulfilment. The fact is, we have little need of any historical inquiry in this case. If the fact be as Grotius and others have suggested, that there is here reference to the worship of Æsculapius, whose symbol was the serpent, this discovery only dismisses it at once from all concern of ours. It makes, as already said, the dwelling where Satan's throne is, as one may say, rather an accident than as anything that would characterize the assembly here; whereas, in fact, in the order of development which these addresses so plainly manifest, we have come exactly to that which in the most marked way characterizes the period which followed that of the heathen persecutions. Every one knows it was Constantine who put an end to these; and that the imperial throne became thus the recognized protector of the delivered Church. It might be urged, no doubt, that it then was Satan's throne no longer; but we must look much deeper before we can get proper assurance as to this. Satan's throne, which the world is, is not a local one. It is neither at Pergamos nor at Rome. It is universal, "The prince of this world cometh," says the Lord, "and hath nothing in Me." That too, it may be urged, was said before the cross, in which Satan received his judgment, and therefore before Christianity had even come in its proper character; but the apostle, as we find elsewhere, has met this argument in the completest way, and overthrown it. Satan, says the apostle, writing to the Corinthians, is not merely the prince of this world, but the "god" of it. He says, literally, not the god of this world, but "the god of this age." "In whom the god of this age hath blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The difference as to the word is significant. "The age" here is the word used in the second of Ephesians for the "course" of this world. It is the world in its course from the beginning to the end of it; a course which certainly had not ended when the apostle wrote. Christianity had then come, as no one can question; yet Satan still was the god of the age. He ruled the "course of the world," not as an ordinary ruler even, but as one who attracted—awful as it is to think of it—the worship of men's hearts. That is what "the god of this age" means; and that does not cease until, in the period yet to come, Satan is cast into the abyss, and shut up there, to deceive the nations no more until the 1000 years are fulfilled. Thus it is plain how little Satan's throne is limited to Pergamos, or is in any wise local.

Dwelling "where Satan's throne is," therefore, is simply dwelling in the world of which he is prince; yet some may ask as to this also, what moral character attaches to dwelling in the world? But Scripture at least is plain that the world is the place of our pilgrimage, not the place where we dwell.* It is the wilderness, not the "city of habitation," for the saint; and we shall find elsewhere, as we go on in Revelation, the dwellers upon the earth spoken of in this way. They are those who, instead of being pilgrims, have settled down in it. How this connects with Pergamos as giving us the time of the establishment of the Church, as men speak, is plain. In fact, everything was at once and largely changed, and it is quite in accordance with this also that it should be said to those here, "Thou holdest fast My name, and hast not denied My faith." It was, truly, a time of zealous orthodoxy; though this was altered afterward,

* In this connection it is significant that the same word is used to describe Satan's connection with the world; it is, "where Satan dwelleth." Surely that which can be described as the abode of Satan is sufficiently characterized. What reproach, then, when the same expression is also used of the professed people of God!—S. R.

among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast	<i>c cfr. ver. 4. cf. ver. 20. d Num. 25. 1 3. 2 Pet. 2. 15.</i>
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when Arianism for the time came in like a flood. But the Council of Nice, which has given its name to one of the orthodox creeds of Christendom, showed this character. There is a glance here at the past in a special manner—"the days in which Antipas was My faithful witness," (witness and martyr were one in him,) "who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth." Antipas ("every one against") was a suited general name for such witnesses, when every one was against the man who testified for Christ. Times had changed since then, as is intimated, and another character belonged to the present. Thus everything suits the time succeeding the persecutions, and the name Pergamos is thoroughly significant. If divided in two, the latter part of the word is "gamos" a marriage." The other part is "though"—"a marriage though"! as if it were said, in spite of all that had so recently manifested the spirit of the world as against Christ, here now was the Church united to it in permanent relationship. The heart astray from Him, the spouse of Christ has given herself to another—a condition of things to which the words in James are the sharpest rebuke: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

No doubt they would have said, and indeed did say, that the world was a changed world under these circumstances; but when was the world ever changed so as really to have received Christ? It might throw the mantle of profession over its nakedness, but that was no change, surely, for the better; and if we take Scripture, there is not a hint throughout the New Testament of any betterness to be expected in it in this way. The position of the Christian is characterized by this, that he is crucified to the world by the cross of Christ. No doubt the light of Christianity let in upon it had still power to drive many of the unclean things into their native darkness; and that manners were benefited, if not hearts purified, there need be no contention. The latter, the hand of Constantine, imperial ruler of the world as he might seem, was plainly inadequate to accomplish, and his own life was in no wise Christian. It is plain, then, how much was needed the two-edged sword to cut this unholy tie between the Church of Christ and the world of Satan. Such a compromise at the very beginning was necessarily setting God's word aside, and gave up His rights, as the very condition of its existence. *Every such compromise is, in fact, but a surrender.* The state induced, the Lord's next words show us; although here again they present a certain difficulty such as we have before found, and which requires the spiritual mind to set us free from. How could the Lord say in such a case as this, "I have a few things against thee," when, plainly, there were so many? The secret of this is a sorrowful and solemn one. Where first love is lost, and the soul therefore adrift from its true anchorage, the measure of things becomes necessarily altered. All afterwards would necessarily be little in comparison with the loss of that, to lose which was, in fact, to lose all power for steadfastness. Faith may still be held, while no longer in a good conscience; and, as the apostle warns in that connection, that is the way to shipwreck of the faith itself. The "few things" here were only in this sense few; but when the back is upon Christ, it is only a question of the depth of the resulting darkness. The Church was now settled in the world, and there follows as a matter of course that it should now have in it those who hold the doctrine of Balaam,—prophet of God in some sense, yet loving "the wages of unrighteousness." From hence came his "doctrine," in which the power of Moab (the world) was taught to cast a snare before the sons of Israel. The history we have in Numbers; and Jude has referred us to it as characterizing an intermediate state in the history of apostasy, between those who simply went in the way of Cain, and those who come out openly in the end in insurrection against the divine King and Priest, and so perish in the gainsaying of Korah. It is the ecclesiastical evil here, as Cain's is that of simple unbelief, and Korah's open apostasy. We know how much Balaam could

say that was true and right, and how zealously he could profess that not all the silver and gold that Balak could give could bribe him to say other than God had put into his mouth to say. Yet, spite of all this, Balaam was, according to his name, but "the destroyer of the people," who could take advantage of his very knowledge of what the people were to God, and what the God was to whom they were a people, to betray them to their ruin. We know by the history that the snare was to mix up the people of whom he had said, as from God, that they dwelt alone, and were not reckoned among the nations—to mix them up with these, so as to learn their manners.* The eating idol-sacrifices, and the moral evil connected so constantly with these, came in as the necessary result. Here we are not to think of a literal fulfilment. The impurity before us is that which, as we have seen, God speaks of in the same manner as, indeed, adultery; and idolatry soon came in, alas, in various shapes and under Christian names. In truth, it was another God than the One whom Christ had manifested, whom the masses came to worship—an evil against which the apostle John protests so earnestly in the last words of his first epistle, saying—"Children, keep yourselves from idols." Men must have some God; and there is no snare so seductive as what is in fact a false one, worshiped under the name of the true. Jesuitism afterwards taught the heathen everywhere simply to baptize their idols and retain them; and this has been repeated many times in the history of the professing Church. The temples dedicated to the Assyrian Queen of Heaven in Egypt became, one after another, nominally Christian churches, when Christians once had learned to talk of a queen of heaven too. The substitution of Mary for Ashtar made no great difference.

In Balaam himself, as we know, the ruling motive was the seeking of reward. He was, for the time at least, Balak's hired prophet, and prophesied to suit his master, though compelled first to declare the counsel of God. It is easy to understand how, when the Church came to have in her hand the good things of the world, there should be plenty of false prophets after this manner, who would necessarily seek to maintain that worldly association to which they owed so much. Balaam had himself, as far as the history goes, no enmity against the people whom he thus betrayed. He merely sought his own, as the hired prophets of Christendom now would naturally do. There were of course many who, though connected with the system, were not in spirit followers of Balaam; nor is it here put as if this were the universal evil. The thing charged is that the professing Church had now manifest room for these. The system favored, and did not cast them out. The trouble is that men look at the individual without realizing the evil of the system of which the individual is the fruit. Moreover, the fact that all were not alike in this would incline men naturally to such a thought. An Ambrose or a Chrysostom would by his personal character, though exceptional, justify in the eyes of how many that with which they were connected; and when things are once established, the tendency is to accept them very much without question. "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain" is an argument as notable as ever. The comparatively few are those who, as the unsettled souls for which they are counted, disturb others with their desire to dig to the foundations. Tradition grows in honor by the multiplication of the generations who follow it, while truth strangely has no such ability, but needs to be constantly maintained of God, or is inevitably corrupted. Thus Rome has gone on adding doctrine to doctrine, as the years passed; always more and more away from the truth, and never turning towards it. Alas, it is only an exhibition of "the course of this world." Call the world the Church if you like; it does not alter it—a course which is under the rule of "the prince of the power

* It will be remembered that this mixture of Israel was with Moab and Midian, which typically suggest profession—Moab being kinsman with Israel according to the flesh—and the world, the "strife" coming in through lust. This is in accord with the spiritual meaning of Pergamos. Here is the unholy alliance with the world, and it is through profession that this is effected. The child of God instinctively shrinks from the world, open and manifest; but then profession is tolerated, so that the union with the world is effected by this go-between. Moab will lead on to the unholy marriage with Midian.—S. R.

a snare before the sons of Israel, to eat *idol sacrifices and commit fornication. So also hast thou those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in like manner.

e ver. 20.
Acts 15. 29.
cf. 1 Cor. 5 1.
cf. 1 Cor. 10.
19 22.
f ver. 6.

of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." How great a snare, therefore, is this union of Church and world, in which necessarily the world gains all the Church loses, and the grieved Spirit seems almost no restraint upon the growth of the evil!

It is no wonder that here we find, along with those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, those now who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans in like manner. The two work well together. Nicolaitanism is, as we see now, a "doctrine." That which is spoken of as "deeds" in Ephesus is now crystalized into a doctrine to be accepted and defended. The people sunk in worldliness have become merely secular, and unfit for spiritual things. They naturally commit them, therefore, to those who are set apart to such things, who have time to devote themselves to them, and a training which they need, to find their way amid all the complexities that are necessarily arising. The Church must have its creeds, its canons, and its councils. The word of God can no more be trusted to settle things, where, on the contrary, so much is needed to be unsettled. Scripture would change the whole condition; but this only sets aside Scripture as unsuited to the times; and the wayfarer must not be a fool, but skilled in much traditional learning, if he would not err. The Jewish character of all this is evident. The work of the synagogue of Satan has wrought disaster enough. Scripture, with its direct simplicity of utterance, its word for individual consciences, its imperative claim of authority, if it cannot be permitted any more to judge, must be judged, or at least must practically drop very much out of thought; and this, we well know, was more and more the case. Souls everywhere in comparative distance from God, even those of the truest, were groping thus largely in the darkness. The spiritual were the clergy, or the spiritual life might be permitted to be realized in those who would bury themselves in the convent or hide in the desert. The Church, instead of the Spirit, was becoming the interpreter of Scripture; the Church determined doctrine for the mass, who, while in the mass they belonged to it, individually had scarcely place at all.

With all this, the ministry had naturally become a priesthood. This would be part of its inheritance from Judaism, but which on that very account was significant of the loss of Christian place and privilege which had come in. The very word "priest," in its history, is an indication of this. In Greek the word is *hiereus*, "one devoted to God" or "the God," "to the things of God." In this way the offerings, which were the *hiera*, were naturally in his hand to offer. The Latin word was similar, *sacerdos*, in the same way, "a person sacred or devoted to God." But this is characteristic of the whole Christian assembly, not of a class among Christians; and it is the apostle Peter himself, pre-eminently the Jewish apostle, and claimed by Rome as its first pope, who claims for them this character. They are, he says, "a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;" but the very word "priest" shows how this had been departed from, for "priest" is nothing else than a contracted form of "presbyter" or "elder," which had naturally no such connection. With the elders the epistles to Timothy and Titus make us familiar; and we know from the Acts that the apostles appointed them in various assemblies. The elder, as we see in Timothy, was, as the word indicates, a man in years, who could take naturally the place of adviser to others, ministering the wisdom which he had gained by long familiarity with the needs and difficulties of the saints. "Elder" and "bishop" were thus practically synonymous, the last word simply meaning "overseer," thus characterizing the office which the elder had, one of fatherly oversight in the assembly. But there is no thought in it of any special privilege in drawing near to God. The transformation thus of elder or presbyter into priest is intensely significant. It originates in that which shows how the original place that all had as priests with God was lost, and this

“Repent, therefore; but if not, I am coming to thee quickly, and will make ^hwar with them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ^eear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies. To him that over-

g vers. 5, 21.
ch. 3. 19.
cf. 2 Cor. 7.
9-11.
h *cf.* ch. 19.
11.

cf. 2 Thess. 2. 8; *cf.* Matt. 24. 51. *i* ver. 29.

had become the inheritance of an official class. The special priesthood in Israel's case even, was contrary to that which God proposed for the Jewish people. They were to be what Christians are, “a kingdom of priests;” but under the legal covenant this was impossible. No one could upon that ground draw near to God at all. Even the priests were in the mass shut out from His presence; and the exceptional privilege of the high priest upon the day of atonement was scarcely privilege at all, in view of all the circumstances connected with it. The voice of the law was, as the Lord Himself declared it even to Moses, the mediator between Himself and the people, “Thou canst not see My face. There shall no man stand before Me and live.” The official priesthood there, instead of involving any going out in ministry, such as the possession of the gospel necessities for the Christian, was sustained with the well known fact that in Israel there was really none of this. The way into the holiest was not made manifest. God was in the darkness, not in the light. In very mercy He could not come out to the people, for it would have been their destruction; and thus, as there was no real coming out of God, no real going in to God, there was no message of peace and joy such as now His grace has given us. Christ “came and preached peace,” says the apostle (Eph. ii. 17) “to those who were afar off,” but also to those that were nigh as well; and he significantly adds, “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” This is the new thing in Christianity without which even priesthood in its full character was impossible, and thus the Christian priesthood goes far beyond the Jewish one: but in this way it is the priesthood not of a class, but of all. And if it has become that of a class, Christianity has lost of necessity one of its distinctive characters. And this is what the very thought of a laity implies, a “people” such as were Israel,—people of God, in a sense, but not brought near to God: a people who could not therefore, as those brought near, take up the things of God. Thus we see what a doctrine of Nicolaitanism must imply as to the general condition.*

We need not wonder then that the Lord said, “which thing I hate.” Now His word is, “Repent therefore; and if not, I am coming to thee quickly, and will make war with them with the sword of My mouth.” He does not say, *with thee*—guilty even as all were in the matter; but He knows how, as Jude instructs, “of some to have compassion, making a difference.” And this sword of His mouth is, as we know, that which is in character discerning, discriminative. It separates between “joints and marrow,” between “soul and spirit,” and “is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” If we put all this together, it is impossible not to see that we have a growing evil condition among Christians plainly pointed out to us. There is an active energy of evil, a “mystery of iniquity,” which already works; a power of Satan which is seeking to get between the soul and God, and under which all evils will be fostered and come more and more to their ripe fruit. There may be, and there is, as the apostle has told us, a present restraint. The Spirit of God is in the Church, and is not to be driven out by all the efforts of the enemy. Nevertheless, the path of His people is becoming more and more individual. Those that are true to Him will of necessity be more and more separated from the corrupt mass, and, if not outwardly, yet will be in spirit mourners over that with which they are in contact.

* While in the mercy of God the extreme of hierarchy ceased in the churches of the Reformation, yet much of the spirit of it remains in the clergyman. He is a person of special privilege, and alone permitted to perform certain rites. Thus the root of Nicolaitanism abides. We may thank God that many who bear the name of clergymen are true-hearted servants of Christ, and would repudiate any thought of being a sacred class. But the principle remains.
—S. R.

cometh, will I give of the ^dhidden manna; and I will give him a ^kwhite stone, and on the stone a ^anew name written, which no one knoweth but he that ^mreceiveth it.

cf. Phil. 1. 21 with Phil. 3. 12-14. *k cf.* 2 Sam. 23. 8, etc. *l cf.* Jno. 1. 42; *cf.* ch. 3. 12; *cf.* Isa. 62. 2. *m cf.* ch. 14. 3; *cf.* Song 6. 3.

J Ex. 16. 33, 34.
Heb. 9. 4.
cf. Phil. 3. 10.

The address to the overcomer now is in perfect keeping with what we have seen to be the character of Pergamos as a whole. The Lord, significantly, in the first place carries us back to the wilderness, for the world with the Church settled in it is not less a wilderness on that account, but rather the more. But it is only he who realizes this wilderness condition who will find the gracious provision which God has made for him. In the wilderness, because it grew nothing for them, because they were mere pilgrims through it, God provided, as we know, the bread from heaven; and now, says the Lord, "To him that overcometh will I give of the hidden manna." But we must notice, nevertheless, that it is the *hidden* manna of which He speaks. The hidden manna was that preserved in the wilderness to be carried into the land, that the children of Israel, when there, might see the food with which the Lord had sustained them in the wilderness. For us it is the evident and beautiful picture of what will be the result in eternity of the realization of the wilderness condition here. The food of the wilderness will be there enjoyed again; and, must we not say, in that time, when everything will be perfected, enjoyed in a fuller way than even in the wilderness it could have been? For, what is this manna? It is Christ Himself, as He has declared of Himself, "the bread that came down from heaven," the food of His people ever. Christ has come down, not merely in manhood, but Himself also into the conditions of the wilderness, come down to know all that is proper to man here, apart from sin; and even as to sin, to bear it, though the sinless One, in His own body upon the tree. It is, as we know better day by day, through the trial of the wilderness that we learn continually better the grace of Him who has come down into it, and are made to learn His thoughts, His ways, His grace and tenderness, and to find thus communion with Himself in all the power of this to sustain the soul. But the manna is hidden now; Christ is gone on high; but He is the same Christ, without any possibility of change. On the throne He is still the One who served us in our need in the lowliest condition; and the Servant's heart, that which love gave Him, is still His own. We are to realize that now; but how we shall realize it, when we are above with Him, when we shall be competent to see Him as He is; when we shall be able under the glory manifest in Him better to realize that glory which faith has learned to be in Him, the glory of the love which brought Him down in service! How we shall turn back then to the wilderness itself to read again the old experiences that we had of Him when we went through it, to taste them with a new freshness and sweetness in that place where there will be no more inability, no remnant of indifference, but when every spiritual sense will be always at its highest! What shall we not learn of the Man Christ Jesus there! And one can see in this way how we must have been in the wilderness, must have had the experiences of the wilderness, in order to be able to enter into this. No angel, it is plain, could know Him thus as we do. And must it not be that while every one of us will find with Him a deeper enjoyment than we have ever known, yet this enjoyment will be measured by that which we have had of Him on the way there? We must bring, in this sense, the manna with us out of the wilderness, in order to enjoy it in the land. A solemn consideration for us surely this is, which makes the reward here in a very strict sense the reward of the overcomer, the one whom the world does not overcome, but who overcomes it; all the more difficult indeed when the Church itself is in the world and laying hold of the world as having right to it in a way which, however, does not make him who does this the master, but the slave!

There is another promise here, the promise of the white stone, and it speaks to us clearly also of the time when we shall be with Him, and of that which

² (18-29):
Thyatira.
The falsely
pretentious
teaching of
the woman
Jezebel. A
remnant beginning to be separated.

² And to the angel of the assembly in Thyatira write:—These things saith the "Son of God, who hath His eyes as a °flame of fire, and his ²feet are like unto fine brass. I know thy ²works, and ²love, and ²faith,

q ver. 2, etc. r cf. Gal. 5:22; cf. 1 Jno. 3. 14, 17. s cf. 1 Rom. 5:1.

n Heb. 4.14.
cf. Lk. 1.35.
o ch. 1. 14.
ctr. Song 5.
12.
p ch. 1. 15.
cf. Isa 63.3.
s cf. 1 Rom. 5:1.

speaks of the intimacy in which we shall be with Him also. The white stone was that which was put into the voter's urn with the name of the candidate approved upon it; and the white stone here speaks of such approval, but the approval is on His part. In the manna we see the appreciation of Christ by the saint, but in the white stone the appreciation of the saint by Christ. It is His approbation of the overcomer that is emphasized here, and the new name written on the stone is something between Him and the individual alone. "No one knoweth it but he that receiveth it." A "name" is in Scripture not the mere distinguishing of one individual from another. It is always significant. How significant is Christ's own name! He, too, has a new name which He speaks of later on. But if names are thus significant, they are so as really characterizing the person who is named. Here, therefore, the name must characterize that which Christ recognizes in the overcomer, recognizes and appreciates, recognizes as a tie between the overcomer and Himself; as a secret, as it were, of love which can be enjoyed together. What an enjoyment to have His approbation thus! And how brightly the individuality comes out here, forced, one may say, upon His people in a day of departure such as we have before us now, but none the less dear to Him when in faith we accept it, and learn day by day better to walk our individual path under His eye, as if there were no other. How clearly we see in all this that that expression with which His word to Pergamos begins, and which some think is such a hopeless enigma to discover meaning in it, is indeed the very thing that gives character to all here. It is the Church dwelling where Satan's throne is—an evil which we may not realize by becoming so familiar with it; which opens wide the door for the followers of Balaam; with seekers of their own things instead of the things of Christ; with the idolatry which the spirit of covetousness itself is and leads to, and with all else as laxity connected with this. Yet God's way is ever a way of peace and encouragement, and the hidden manna and white stone face thus the overcomer in just such a scene as this.

² We come now to Thyatira, to find here only a further development of what we have been looking at. The Lord presents Himself still more with characters of judgment. He is "the Son of God who hath His eyes as a flame of fire and His feet like unto fine brass." The eyes speak of the present; the feet, of the future. Those feet are yet to tread "the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God." And He is the Son of God who speaks here. How significant of the degradation which His professing people have been giving Him, who have taken His very humiliation, the lowly door by which He entered into humanity itself, to keep Him at the door and humble Him continually—the Son of a human mother, thus the Babe in His mother's arms to listen to her word and do her will! Who that realizes what we are coming to now but must realize the indignant glance at a Mariolatry which He will not honor more by noticing it, only letting His own divine glory shine out to consume it upon the instant! Yet He is writing here still, after His old manner, patiently ready to own all that He can own, taking forth the precious from the vile, as His mouth always must. "I know thy works, and love, and faith, and service, and thine endurance, and thy last works to be more than the first." One would say, here certainly is something that is even the opposite of Ephesus, as being a condition improving instead of degenerating—last works more than the first. It is quite evident indeed that He is separating those to whom He speaks from that which is, nevertheless, in the Church itself, and, alas, not without toleration more or less of those whom He can yet praise after this manner. As we go on in this address we shall find, indeed, that there is a remnant more and more being sep-

and 'service, and thine "endurance, and thy "last works to be more than the first. But I have "against thee that thou sufferest the woman * "Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she "teacheth and leadeth astray my servants to "commit fornication and to eat of idol

l cf. Rom. 12.

1.

u cf. 2 Pet.

1. 6.

v cf. 2 Thess.

3. 4.

w cf. ver. 4.

x 1 Ki. 16. 31,

32.

cf., Prov. 6.

24.

* Some read, "thy wife."

y cf. Matt. 13. 33 with Gal. 5. 9, 11; cf. Gal. 2. 21. z ver. 14; cf. ch. 17. 3-5; ctr. 2 Cor. 11. 2.

arated from a mass which is getting more and more corrupt—the mass itself in fact so corrupt that He does not address it. He had spoken, but He speaks no more. He had given time for repentance, but it was all in vain: and it is here that that significant change takes place which has been noticed before—the address to the overcomer taking precedence of the call to "hear what the Spirit saith." There is no hope of the mass. It is "the rest," "as many as have not this doctrine," those who "have not known the depths of Satan," among whom alone He can look now for him "who hath an ear to hear." The significant thought here is manifestly "the woman Jezebel." She is not a mere disfiguring exerescence, but the very heart of the condition—"the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess," while teaching and leading astray Christ's servants to commit fornication and to eat of idol sacrifices. Thus she is herself the direct follower and fruit of those Balaam followers whom we have had to do with in Pergamos; only it is plain that now there is something infinitely more pretentious than anything that has gone before. This woman, while propagating her abominable iniquity, does not hesitate to claim the very authority of God for what she is doing. She is a prophetess. Her voice is thus the voice of God Himself. Yet she is but "the woman Jezebel." That is not accidental, that significant name. It is not a mere piece of history that one with that name happened to be there. It is not meaningless, this link with the history of one of those times of debased apostasy on the part of Israel when Ahab was leading Israelites into the worship of Baal, he "whom Jezebel his wife stirred up." It is from this connection with that history, very probably, that there is a reading here in some old manuscripts which makes it "thy wife Jezebel," instead of "the woman;" but, most certainly, Jezebel is not the wife of the angel whom the Lord addresses here. He could not represent or be represented by Ahab, while none the less Jezebel keeps the significance of her name and of the historical connection, only with added features that Jezebel of old did not even present; for we find nothing, at least as to her, of her calling herself a prophetess, as this woman does, although she had her hundreds of false prophets as her retainers.

If we go back to those parables of the Lord in the thirteenth of Matthew which we have already had to refer to in connection with the addresses here, we shall find another point of significance. Pergamos, it is clear, represents the mustard seed grown into a tree—Christianity rooting itself in the world, and with the powers of darkness, the birds of the air, lodging in its branches. The next parable is that of the woman; and it is a woman who has to do now with the doctrine: doctrine which, as we know, was in fact entrusted to the Church to hold, but in no wise to manufacture. The woman is making a kind of bread of her own. She is putting leaven into the three measures of meal which she has in her hands, a leaven which is by and by to permeate the mass of it. The woman is the constant figure of the Church at large—woman, not man. Christ is the "man," the husband to whom she is espoused, to whom she is to be true and subject—the Church that Christ loved and gave Himself for, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He shall have that joy at last; but meanwhile there is this external Church that represents Him here upon the earth; fatally at last misrepresents Him, and goes astray in heart to others than Himself. This is the woman Babylon, as we see her in the seventeenth chapter of this book, which gives us all

sacrifices. And I gave her ^atime that she might repent, and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I ^bcast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great ^ctribulation, except they shall repent of her works; and I will ^dkill her children with death; and ^eall the assemblies shall know that I am he that ^fsearcheth reins and hearts; and I will give to you

a cf. 2 Pet. 3. 9.
b cf. Ezek. 16. 37-41 with ch. 17. 16, 17.
c cf. ch. 6. 4, etc.
d cf. Ps. 137. 8, 9.
e cf. Isa. 26. 9 with Acts 5. 10, 11. *f* Jer. 17. 10.

the features, more depraved if possible, of the woman before us now. Jezebel is but the woman with the heaven; and if those three measures of meal represent indeed—as we have seen when looking at it,—the fine flour of the meat-offering, which was *not* to be adulterated with heaven, but which represents Christ Himself as the food of His people entrusted to the care of His own to preserve it without adulteration, then we can see the full extent of wickedness here in this woman who calls herself a prophetess, but only prophecies to teach and lead astray Christ's servants. The "woman" is the Church, which is taught and can hold what she is taught, but *never* teaches. And it is significant that that very teaching which claims authority as the teaching of the Church, is that which, for every one who has an ear to hear, has most emphatically led astray God's people wherever it has been listened to. That voice of the Church is a lie on the very face of it, as represented in its principle, "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*"—"What always has been believed, everywhere, and by all." The moment that is attempted to be justified by history, the consent of the fathers, of councils, or whatever else, it is an open, proved, notorious fraud, just fit for a false prophetess whose very name carries her false pretension, Jezebel, "the chaste," but whom God stamps as a harlot, "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

That which is spoken of as the voice of the Church is simply the voice of chosen witnesses, who have usurped in men's minds the place of the Church, who often witness against one another, as also in most cases against the very system which claims them and would make much of them. The Church becomes thus the councils, the clergy, finally the pope; narrowing continually in proportion as it rises more and more into complete domination of that which is now indeed a mere conquered populace, bound and burdened by that which has assumed the authority of Christ, only to seduce His servants. The long time that she has lasted is interpreted here by the Lord, simply as a time given her to repent, and she will not repent. It is of the very essence of Rome that being infallible she cannot do it. It would be the loss at once of her whole pretension. Thus nothing but judgment can await her. "Behold," says the Lord, "I cast her into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they shall repent of her works." This evidently contemplates the time of which the Lord promises to Philadelphia that she shall be kept out of "the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try those that dwell upon the earth." It speaks of the time when the ten horns and the beast shall destroy the woman, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire. The children produced by her are not owned as even the possible children of God at all. "I will kill them with death," the Lord says. They are the proper fruit of the blasphemous system, and to be distinguished, as the Lord does immediately distinguish, from those who are indeed suffering her, and who may have felt the power of her seduction, but who, nevertheless, have something better in their hearts than this would intimate; and the Lord is He that searches the reins and hearts, and who, amid all the confusion, will give to each one according to his works.

He turns now from Jezebel and her followers to separate from them a people who are beginning to be more or less separated—in heart, if no more: "To you, I say, the rest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, such as have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I cast upon you no

each one ^gaccording to your works. But unto you I say, the ^hrest who are in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, such as have not known the ⁱ'depths of Satan, as they say, I do not ^jcast upon you any other burden; only what ye have ^khold fast till I shall come. And he that ^lovercometh, and that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give ^mauthority over the nations, and he shall rule ⁿ* them with an ^oiron rod,

g ch. 20. 12, 13.
h cf. 2 Cor. 5. 10.
i cf. Jude 22. 28.
j cf. ch. 3. 4.
k cf. 2 Tim. 3. 1-8.
l cf. 2 Tim. 2. 17, 18.
m cf. 1 Cor. 2. 10.
n cf. Acts 15. 28 with

* "Tend" (as a Shepherd).

1 Jno. 5. 3. *k* ch. 3. 11; 1 Thess. 5. 21. *l* ver. 11, etc; *cf.* Heb. 3. 6. *m* cf. 2 Tim. 2. 12; *cf.* ch. 3. 21. *n* Ps. 2. 9; ch. 12. 5.

other burden." Plenty of burdens they have, alas, of necessity, in such a condition of things as has arisen and is pictured here, when in the common speech of professing Christians there are what He calls "depths of Satan." Let any one think of the maxims of Jesuitism, for instance, which have gone far and wide beyond themselves. Who can for a moment think that this language is too strong? The very foundations are removed. Morality and religion have no necessary connection. Brigands, as is well known, in Italy bring the gains of their infamy to deposit them at the feet of the Queen of Heaven. The whole system is such that no one can be any longer certain of anything. The child is not baptized if the priest never meant to baptize it, however scrupulously the outward form may be observed. The mass is not celebrated, except the priestly intention is all right about it. And who can any longer say, even according to themselves, what remains to them of these sacramental ordinances, which, after all, are all they have to trust in? What a mockery of Satan it all is! Amid it all there were, as we know, hunted, persecuted companies who, more and more, refused these abominations; and no doubt many who come down to us in history, the victims of the slanders of their persecutors, but whom God will bring out in another character in His own time. Doubtless at the best they might know little, for these were, as is even commonly said, "the dark ages," and darkness there was everywhere—darkness just in proportion as the Church ruled—the light of the world, as she should have been in the absence of the day; but it was much, with God, to maintain any integrity at all in this confusion, and what they have the Lord bids them to hold fast until He shall come.

It is now that we have, first of all, in these addresses, the intimation of His coming: and it furnishes one of those proofs, of which there are many, that the condition here continues more or less to exist until that time. Until the Lord has taken His people to Himself, Babylon will still reign a queen, and count herself no widow and to see no sorrow. But then "shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her." How differently men have learnt to speak, in the false and hollow liberalism of the day, from the way in which the word of God speaks of these abominations! It is quite true that God has His own amongst them, as has been already said; but that makes only the things themselves worse, that spatter and befoul the people of God themselves. His servants, there may be many, more or less led astray. Shall we count that less evil which is leading them astray? The Lord's words are now to the overcomer simply; and here, in opposition to the false rule of the woman, it is said, "he that overcometh, and that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with an iron rod, as the vessels of a potter are broken in pieces, as I also have received from My Father."

At Corinth, where they were already in their measure, though not in this measure, reigning as kings apart from those whom they yet owned their leaders,—men appointed unto death,—we see the beginning of that which has developed into an open assumption of authority, all the worse for its being a spiritual pretension, as with Rome. The time of rule for the Church, says the apostle, will

as the vessels of a potter are broken in pieces, as I also have ^oreceived from my Father; and I will give him the ²morning star. ²He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies.

o cf. Jno. 5. 22, 27.
p ch. 22. 16.
2 Pet. 1. 19.
cf. 1 Thess. 4. 13-18.
q ver. 17, etc.

not come until all the saints reign together, and reign with Christ. The very pretension of rule in the meanwhile is stamped thus as necessarily false. When the time to reign comes, there will be no manner of doubt, no need to assert any longer a power which is manifest; and then it will be indeed a rule with an iron rod necessarily: for it is the time when judgment will return to righteousness, and when through judgment the inhabitants of the earth shall learn it. They have despised and refused grace. They must of necessity bow when Christ goes forth in power. And yet the word "rule" here shows the peculiar character of it, the heart which, nevertheless, is directing everything. It is the *rule of a Shepherd* that is signified by it; and if it be an iron rod, a rod of irresistible power that is in the Shepherd's hands, yet it will always recognize that it is for the flock that He is contending—indeed, for the earth itself, to deliver it from that which has oppressed it for ages, and, as is said afterwards in this book, "to destroy those that destroy the earth." Throughout the long time of patience, God has not been regardless of what was going on: strong and patient, and provoked every day, He will at last arise in irresistible power, and with one blow shatter the power of all His adversaries. Christ's foes shall be put as a footstool under His feet. The mere human clay will be manifested indeed as but the easily shattered vessels of the potter. How different from the thought men have of the quiet conversion of the world by the gospel, and which so many still entertain, in spite of the centuries through which that conversion has lingered, and in spite of the apostasy of a large mass of those that have borne His name! But with the uprising of the Sun of Righteousness the day will arise at last. Suddenly, when the blackest hour of night has come, when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the peoples, the Lord shall arise upon Israel once more, and His glory shall be seen upon them (Isa. lx. 2). But the promise here anticipates the day. The Lord says to the overcomer, not that His people "shall shine forth as the sun" (Matt. xiii. 43) when the Sun arises, but here, "I will give him the morning star." The morning star comes before, and heralds the day. It does not lighten the earth, but it prophesies of the coming light; and thus the Lord will remove His own, as we have seen in Thessalonians, caught up to meet Him in the air, and they shall be ever with the Lord; when He comes forth, therefore, to come forth with Him. Here is the Morning Star, and it strikingly characterizes the standpoint of the book of Revelation. If Malachi closes the Old Testament with the announcement of the Sun of Righteousness arising upon the earth with healing in His wings, the book of Revelation closes the New with the announcement of the hope of His heavenly saints, Christ as the bright and Morning Star (Rev. xxii. 16.).

Here ends now the first division of these epistles, in which we have seen the Church still in measure one, but with the growth of evil manifest in it, the mystery of iniquity thoroughly at work, whatever restraint there may be upon it. No doubt Rome, spite of its boast of being the Church, is not after all the whole profession. The Greek and Eastern churches have not known the woman Jezebel. They have halted at Pergamos, of which the civil head of the Russian church is a plain example. It is Constantine, so to speak, who is their ruler still, and not the woman. But this is but a merciful restraint which has hindered the full development of principles which are at work in her; and she has not broken off from the line of development, but simply halted, as it were, upon the way. We are now to see how God, in His grace, has come in to deliver His people, not merely from subjection to the woman's rule, but from the system which would naturally ripen into this. God has come in to deliver. How far His people have profited by His intervention for them, and what will be the final issue, we are to see in the three assemblies which remain to be looked at, and

1(1-6): Sardis. The old unity in some sense maintained, but in a barren concord of death with life.

SECTION 2. (Chap. iii.)

Further division, with freedom from the teaching of the woman.

1. AND to the angel of the assembly in Sardis write:—

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know thy works, that thou

r ch. 1. 4, 16.
c/. Acts 2.
33.

which are no longer histories of the Church in general, but manifestly of a remnant, little as the remnant may show itself to be what God would have it. Failure, alas, is everywhere. We must not expect, if God comes in to deliver, that the deliverance must necessarily be full and entire, as He would have it. He awaits the response of His people to that which He is doing for them; and, (as we find in the history of Israel in the times of the Judges) when God raises up a deliverer who shall judge the people according to the light which God is giving, spite of all this, decline will follow: and the final ruin with which God has already threatened them at Ephesus—the complete removal of the church's candlestick—is only delayed, and not averted.

Sec. 2.

We have already seen, then, a remnant more or less separated in Thyatira. We are now to find the history only that of a remnant. Thyatira is left to go on till the Lord comes, substantially unaltered; but now we have churches in which the woman and her teaching no longer appear. There is a clear break from this; and the very first church here, probably, in its name indicates its remnant character. Sardis has been thought, at least probably, to be from the Hebrew *Sarid*, which means “a remnant.” This certainly agrees in the most distinct way with what we have here, and we shall find now in each of the three addresses a distinct intimation that they go on to the coming of the Lord. Thus in Sardis, characteristically dead indeed and not alive, the Lord threatens that He will come to them as to the world, part of which they really are: “If thou shalt not watch,” He says, “I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come upon thee.” “But,” says the apostle to Christians (1 Thess. v. 4), “ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” To Philadelphia there is a more decisive word, with which promise and warning are united: “I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.” While, finally, to lukewarm Laodicea the Lord says, with no hint any more of a possible repentance which shall avert it, “Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spew thee out of My mouth.” Thus the series of addresses closes with the announcement of general disaster, although the Lord's heart towards His people, and His promise to those who listen to His voice, are found all through. What is the real application of all this we can only understand upon a fuller inquiry.

1. Sardis, as already said, means probably “a remnant;” but we must not imagine by this that it is therefore in any full way according to the Lord's mind. We can remember, as to Israel, the story of the return of such a remnant out of Babylon; but how soon, nevertheless, did that bud of promise reveal the disappointment of the hopes that were wrapped up in it! And Israel's history all through is but in too marked keeping with the history of the Church. Spite of the grace which has been shown her, that faith which is the principle by which alone she stands is, alas, but too little to be found in her: and thus the fuller her blessing, only the deeper her declension, the worse the corruption of the better thing. In Sardis we shall find that there is again being attempted that which is impossible, to unite in a true concord death with life. This, in fact, shows us, if we take these addresses as to be read in continuation, as they clearly are, that here, after all, the old unity is still in some sense maintained: that is, this unity of a barren profession with true faith. There has been no departure from this, and we can hardly fail to find the application to the story of those whom God delivered from the reign of the woman, in what we call “the

time of the Reformation." Here the Lord speaks in character, as always in these addresses, and we see at once what is lacking, although His grace is ready to supply the need. He speaks as He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. Thus the fulness of the Spirit is His; but they need, alas, to be reminded of it. The stars, too, are in His hand: but we shall find that in fact they are put into the hand of another than Christ. "*Cujus regio ejus religio*" became the motto then; that is, "The place in which you live shows your religion." The Church goes with the nation: it is the church of the nation. That is not the rule of the woman any more. It is the rule of the man, but that man is not Christ. It is the official head, or perhaps heads, of the state. It is the principle of the state-church. If you have this, the character of Sardis results as an absolute necessity. You cannot make the state really the Church, however earnestly you attempt it. Preach the Word all over it; hold up the faith of Christ in the fullest way—to make men accept it is wholly beyond man's power. Thus the principle of decadence is sure and manifest.

There is no imputation of false doctrine any more. There is no claim of infallibility, or of inspiration from God. On the other hand, there is, in a way more distinct than heretofore, "a name to live." Under Jezebel there is not this in the same way. With all her pretension, nevertheless the nature of Rome's sacramental system is such as to leave uncertainty in result about all the profession, as they quote from Ecclesiastes, "No man knows whether he is worthy of favor or hatred." Be it so, then, that men are born again in baptism, and are sustained by the body of Christ in the sacrament of the Supper, though they have priestly absolution and the intercession of saints and angels, and of Mary, the gentle mother with her woman's heart, more to be trusted than that of Christ Himself, and who holds the ladder of life by which her votaries ascend to heaven,—yet, after all, at the best there is a long purgation to be accomplished before heaven is reached, and distressing uncertainty. The Reformation, on the other hand, with its announcement of the scriptural truth of justification by faith, made it possible and right for every poor sinner turning to God to find his name in the book of life. How blessed a contrast this with all that the "infallible church" could do for those whom it took in hand to carry through to salvation! But all the more the certainty of this assurance on the part of those who had true faith in Christ, the more impossible, one would say, would it be to give such assurance broadcast among the members of a state-church—that is, the world with the name of Christ.

In fact, this could not be. There had to be a compromise in some way, an adoption of the sacramental system to a certain extent, with a large charitable hope to justify what was really but a giving of that which was holy to the dogs, the attributing of life to that which was dead—every one left very much to determine for himself where he was before God, while others were warned to pass no judgment, and the grace of God availing for the chief of sinners was taken really to make light of necessary saintship in the believer, and so to falsify the power of that which it was intended to honor. Where grace is really, the dominion of sin is broken, as the apostle has shown us, and it is only those who are led by the Spirit of God who can be rightly counted as the children of God. But a state-church in its very nature must attenuate all this to have any warrant for existence, and thus there must of necessity be a compromise, as in fact everywhere there was, and the retention thus far at least of the old Jewish system, the synagogue instead of the assembly of God. Only on the part of some, whose fanaticism the more effectually put its brand upon the truth they had, was there the attempt to find and manifest the Church of God. For the rest, the true Church remained in the old invisibility which had been decreed for it, and thus the truth really proclaimed was everywhere in saddest contrast with the lifeless profession. As the Lord recognizeth here, there were those in Sardis who had not defiled their garments; but these were the exception, not the mass. They were a remnant, so to speak, among the Reformed remnant; and the protest against Rome's errors allowed, nevertheless, in this way, one of Rome's chief errors.

hast a 'name that thou livest, and art dead. Be 'watchful and strengthen the things that remain which are 'about to die, for I have not found thy works 'perfect before my God. "Remember therefore how thou hast

*s cf. Matt. 13. 24-26.
cf. 2 Tim. 3. 5.
cf. 1 Tim. 5. 6.*

t cf. 1 Thess. 5. 6. u cf. Song. 6. 11; cfr. Isa. 58. 11. v cf. Lk. 8. 14; cfr. Phil. 1. 6. w ch. 2. 5; cf. 2 Tim. 1. 13.

That protest was assuredly a necessity; but it was also deemed that there must for this reason be something that would give more stability to it than the testimony of a few scattered and hunted souls. The kings and the nations, alike trodden down under the hard heel of Rome, had plenty of reason for desiring to set up a bulwark against her; and where could they have one more effectual than the profession of a Reformed creed, and putting the power to maintain it into the hands of a civil magistrate? It was the Spirit of God that had raised up a testimony against the evil, but the Spirit of God could not be counted upon by the mass to maintain that testimony. Had not, in fact, the apostle enjoined upon Christians to be subject to the powers that be? Rome had for her followers decreed a large exemption from such a duty. The Church could everywhere, as it pleased, throw the mantle of its charity over those whom the state condemned. On the other hand, for Protestants, the State now was to interfere in that which belonged really to the Church. The creed must be maintained, and non-conformity to the creed be penal. Hence, persecution and laxity went hand in hand. The things of God were committed to hands that were unfit to touch them; and while the purer creed indeed commended itself to a larger circle than of those who had true faith in it, it was thus continually nullified and defiled by its nominal adherents.

We can understand at once, therefore, the Lord's warning here to be watchful and strengthen the things that remained, which were about to die. But the truth can never be maintained by human power. The enforced creed may be, no doubt, a certain safeguard; yet while thus preserved it may actually die out amid the very people whose formula is to preserve it: for this may be but a relic of the dead past, and not a living reality. And this has been seen how often! For, "thou standest by faith" is true of the whole professing body and all that pertains to it, and nothing but faith can finally preserve even the profession of the truth itself. The work of faith was now, therefore, found lacking. "I have not found thy works perfect before My God," says the Lord. If such a condition as the presence of "ten righteous men" might have sufficed to save Sodom, so the actual faith found amongst the comparatively few may give a certain stability to that which without it could have no length of continuation at all; but the general tendency here must needs be downward; and all the churches of the Reformation have proved—whatever truth may have remained in their creed—that it does not involve the maintenance of the creed itself. Rationalism and infidelity are here the evils which threaten it; for if the truth is in the creed, yet infidelity is that which is in the mass of those who should be its supporters, but whose hearts link them with the unbelief, and not with the truth. But there is no power here but the power of the Spirit of God; and that is what has been so much forgotten even among true Christians.

The Lord recognizes in Sardis a work of His grace. He bids them remember how they had received and heard, and keep it and repent. Sad it would be to belittle the wonder of God's grace which wrought in the Reformation, and surely accomplished so much—the effect of which remains with us to-day. It was that which was not of God which has proved the burden upon it—the hindrance not merely to progress, but even to continuance. The men whom God raised up in various countries of Europe at the time of the Reformation were dependent themselves upon no earthly power, nor even upon one another, as Zwingle did not even derive from Luther: and there was everywhere proof that the Spirit of God was working independently in many hearts. These so taught of Him would necessarily come together as led in the same path, and they did so. The trouble

received and heard, and ²keep it and ³repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come [upon thee]* as a ⁴thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come upon thee. But thou hast a ⁵few

x ch. 1. 3.
y ver. 19.
z ch. 16. 15.
cf. Matt. 24.
43.
cf. 1 Thess.
5. 2-5.
a cf. Matt. 7.
14.

* Some early MSS. omit

cf. 2 Tim. 4. 9-11; cf. Jas. 1. 27.

came when men with other motives proffered their help in what they could make in certain respects a common cause with these. It was the old Samaritan cry, "We seek your God as ye do" (Ezra iv. 2), but which was not met as those with Zerubbabel met it then; and if then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building because of their aid *rejected*, still more now did the people of the land weaken the hands of the true people of God by the help which they *accepted*.

It is evil association which constantly corrupts the manners of the Lord's people. Mixture is Satan's constant device, and compromise necessarily grows out of mixture. We cannot walk together except we are agreed. People may say, and do say, "We agree so far; why can we not walk together at least in that in which we are so far together?" All right, if Christ and His will and Word be not left out of the agreement; but when the Church joins with the world, this must of necessity be left out. If orthodoxy be but hypocrisy, or self-deception at the best, what value is there in such orthodoxy before God? Alas, it is only the old leaning upon Egypt which we find so much of in the case of Israel; the end of which was only that they found it a broken reed, which even in the judgment of their enemies themselves was such that if a man lean on it "it will go into his hand and pierce it" (Isa. xxxvi. 6). And yet how constantly we seek help of this kind still! We invoke or accept help which cuts us off from the help of God; and all such things are manifestly only a denial of Him who is the one sufficient security of His people, and the One to whom our obedience should admit of no compromise.

But here the Judaism which has come in manifests its power for evil; Israel's national religion is pleaded in behalf of a world-church now, and after that faith is come—when God has taken it distinctly as the only principle upon which we stand—can yet go back to the legal schoolmaster. The nation in the flesh which God took up was in no wise the same thing as the Church indwelt by the Spirit of God; and when, by and by, God will be again among them as of old, it shall be under that new covenant when they are at last what they have never hitherto been, a nation "all holy;" where there will be no need for one to say to his neighbor, or to his brother, "Know the Lord," because all shall know Him, from the least even to the greatest. But alas, it is the promise of an arm of flesh which makes all these arguments so acceptable to us! Even if we have faith, we have so little faith to build upon God, to walk in absolute independence of all else, so as to be dependent upon Him alone—this is what costs; but how much another course costs! If we would keep a right balance, we must not forget to count up on both sides.

It is not the Reformation itself, so far as it was that, which the Lord judges here. Alas, it was when they ceased to be reformers, when they became conservatives with the caution of such, and had to build up systems to meet the exigencies of the times, then it was that another element came in which God is judging. And after all, how simple a thing to judge, one would think! If the world can be made the Church because we will have it so; if in the largest charity that can be required of us we can confound one of these with the other, then, of course, the national church-system will commend itself to us as having the broadest liberality that can be—fiercely denunciative as it may be of that which will now be the independent action of the Spirit of God, and therefore of the faith that cleaves to God.

The result is that the national church becomes but a dead weight, a burden

names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall ^awalk with me in white, because they are worthy. He that overcometh, he shall be ^cclothed in white garments, and I will not ^dblot his name out of the book of life, and will ^econfess his name before my Father and before his angels. He that ^fhath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies.

*b cf. ch.6.11.
c cf. ch. 19.
7, 8.
d cfr. Ex.32.
32, 33.
cf. ch. 13.8.
cf. ch.20.12.
e Lk. 12.8.
f ver.13,etc.*

upon its living members. The Spirit of God, if He works—as work He will—must needs work in testimony against the evil; and in every such working there will be more and more the disintegration of the body as a whole. The attitude of the Lord toward Sardis here must be that which the Spirit recognizes, and with which He is; and it is an attitude of rebuke and opposition. He thus treats it here as the world, and nothing but the world; a world to which His coming can be nothing but a dread, if realized at all. It is not to His own that the Lord comes as a thief—though people may have adapted this language so as to take off the rebuke of it; rebuke it manifestly is here; yet He owns what He can own. There are still a few names in Sardis (how He speaks as able to call each one by his name!) who have not defiled their garments. They are in the midst of that which would naturally defile them. The touch of death was defilement according to the law in Israel; and the touch of spiritual death, what must that be for those in constant association with it, as in the case before us? Yet, spite of all, Christ is no doubt a sufficiency for every one who seeks to Him; but the result is, if not an outward, yet an inward separation. The Lord owns this fully: “They shall walk with Me in white,” He says, “for they are worthy.” That does not in the least make light of the worldly mixture which, as we see here, characterizes the whole state of things, and of which the Lord speaks to those who have an ear to hear. But the ear may be strangely dulled, even when the heart is in measure right. We are, alas, so much under the power of the circumstances amid which we are! and a national religion has its necessary seduction, bringing together those akin in nature in the recognition of ties which God does recognize, although He puts them in no such place as they are put in here. Yet to break through them requires a spiritual energy which is found in but few, while yet there are many who, without having the spirit of reformers, are nevertheless in spirit separate from the surrounding evil. God does not give us up to our surroundings. But how few they are who are not more or less governed by them! Still He who could own a righteous Lot in Sodom owns such still;—not that they do not suffer, not that their spiritual life is not of necessity overshadowed. How many questions for the conscience, how much exercise of heart, what a burden of sorrow, has to be borne in proportion as one seeks truly to be with God in such a condition of things! God’s way would be that they should walk free. Nevertheless, if He only owned those who were in every way according to His mind, how few could He own at all!

The promise to the overcomer here has a somewhat negative character. “I will not blot his name out of the book of life” is plainly negative; and how significant of the general condition! Out of the Lamb’s book of life how could a name be blotted? It surely could not, and the book of life therefore must here represent something in the hands of men—that “name to live” of which the Lord has spoken at the outset. How widely, in fact, is this assumed and justified by that false charity which would never wake men up to realize their condition, but leave them to drift on to a doom not the less certain because it is out of sight. The clothing in white garments is more positive, as is also the Lord’s confession of His own before His Father and before the angels. Yet in it all there does not seem to be that full emphasis of approval which we find in other addresses. There is not what we have had even in Pergamos of “the hidden manna” and the “white stone.” The sense of the wilderness is not upon the soul in the same way, and with all the light that He has been giving there is not that free-

2 (7-13):
Phila-
delphia.
A move-
ment to
obtain true
fellowship
and keep
Christ's
word.

2. And to the angel of the assembly in Philadelphia write:—These things saith the ^gholy, the ^atrue, he that hath the ^jkey of David, he who ^jopeneth and no one shall shut, and ^kshutteth and no one shall open: I ^lknow thy

cf. Ps. 132. 11. ^j*cf.* Acts 12. 10; *cf.* Acts 16. 6-10; *cf.* 1 Cor. 16. 9. ^k*cf.* Matt. 16. 19; *cf.* ch. 1. 18; *cf.* ch. 20. 1-3. ^l*cf.* ch. 2. 9.

g *cf.* Lk. 1.35.
ctr. 1 Cor. 10.
21.
h *cf.* Jno. 14.
6.
i *cf.* ch. 19. 11.
j *cf.* Isa. 22. 22.
k *cf.* ch. 1.
19;

dom to go with Him which should be the response to it.* The truth is shut up in creeds and stiffened into formulas. The conscience cannot speak for God as it should, and the open Bible of which men make boast, and which indeed is in their hands, is, nevertheless, read too much within the limits imposed by that which is human recognition. The Spirit of God is too little free to interpret as He would, for individuality is lacking; and conscience and heart are nothing if they are not individual.

2. We pass on now to what should have the deepest interest for us, in that it is plainly the only address which is wholly one of commendation. It is not meant by this that there is no more need of overcoming even in Philadelphia. It is not meant that there is no need of exhortation. Nevertheless, it will be felt by any who simply read the words that are before us, that they show us a different state of things from anything elsewhere. Smyrna may be an exception to this, but yet in Smyrna there is that which we know God has always used to purify His people. There is an active persecution going on which calls men to reality, and of which we have nothing here; though it be always true, of course, that "he that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" but there is no crisis of it. There is not in the same way that which forces men to decide for or against Christ. What is here speaks more of a quiet movement of the Spirit, working amid such a lifeless condition as we have seen in Sardis, and recalling men to Christ Himself as the one supreme authority over the soul. It is notable here that Christ speaks of Himself more according to His personal character. He is "the Holy and the True"—words which search out necessarily, and are intended to search out, but which, nevertheless, in connection with the commendation which we find in general, show that there is in Philadelphia's condition that which more answers to His thoughts. They are keeping His word, and not denying His name.

How emphatic that makes the manner of His address here! And the name "Philadelphia" clearly speaks after the same manner. Philadelphia is "brotherly love;" but the love of the brethren would naturally imply a recognition of the brethren, such as is not found in Sardis, for instance. Where the general condition is that of death, it is plain that the relationship of Christ's people to one another cannot be recognized, except in the most partial manner. The true Church, it is said, is invisible. But how, then, can the living affections which are instinctive in Christ's people as such, to one another, find any proper expression? Thus it should be plain that we have here implied an effort, at least, to distinguish the true Church from the false, to make the Church visible; and there is an activity which must be surely of this character, which the Lord recognizes in power as the One who has authority in the kingdom, the key of David, One "who openeth and no one can shut, and shutteth and no one can open." It is only by the context that we can read aright such words as we find here. "I have set before thee," says the Lord, "an opened door, which no one can shut." But for what purpose, then? Plainly, to act according to the character that all

* Yet the promise to clothe in white raiment, coupled with that already given the few who had not defiled their garments,—"they shall walk *with Me* in white,"—is beautifully appropriate and definite. Undefined garments here, maintained feebly but in faith, will mean not only white robes there, but association with Him whose grace alone enabled them to keep themselves unspotted from the world, even when it was in the professing Church. This is, indeed, a foreshadowing of the promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia, though not nearly so full. Have we not also in this remnant in Sardis that which, if true to the light given, later on finds fuller development in Philadelphia, just as we have seen Thyatira having a remnant which is morally linked with Sardis?—S. R.

works: behold I have set before thee an ^mopened door which no one can shut; for thou hast a ⁿlittle power, and

m. cf. 2 Cor. 2.

12.

cf. Acts 14.

27; cf. Heb. 13. 12, 13. n Ju. 8. 4; cf. 2 Sam. 23. 10.

indicates—an opened door for saints that are seeking one another, to find and recognize one another. There is, in some manner, an end of the condition of things, of the mixture we have in Sardis;—within how large a sphere, of course, we have nothing to indicate.*

Philadelphia certainly has not superseded Sardis. We have, as is implied, (but what for the mass would seem an evil augury rather than good,) a division which is again taking place, a necessary line which is being drawn between the world and the Church, but which will therefore imply separation from the world-church. Thus there is a distinct movement, which the Lord encourages. For if division in Corinth could only be condemned, in Sardis, on the other hand, it would be only necessary obedience to the Lord's words; and that is the obedience of which He speaks here: "Thou hast a little power, and hast kept My word." There is an energy which is scarcely found even with the overcomers in Sardis. It is but a little power indeed. How small a power one would think would be necessary to make God's people walk according to the Word which He has given them, in disregard of whatever name or authority might be pleaded against this! Yet, such as there is, He commends it. After a condition such as we have been looking at, it is refreshing to find that which undoubtedly speaks of a new spiritual activity, which the Lord owns, and with which He is.

It is also important to notice here that it is Christ's word that they have kept. In Sardis there were things that had been received and heard, though they were dying out, and to which the Lord would recall them. But here it is not simply something that they have received. It is not something recovered to them out of the Word, but the Word itself; the Word restored to its rightful place of authority over the soul; the Word with no limitations or reserves; the Word, not as defined by human creeds, but as it is in itself, with all the fulness of blessing that is in it, ready for the soul that craves it. This is really a central point in all the commendation here. In Christ's word thus kept, His authority is owned, His sole authority. Nothing must come between the conscience and His Word.

Thus, it should be plain, there is room for growth, for progress. A door open in this way, traditions, even reformed traditions, would sadly hinder. The Word is opening, and encouraging souls to take possession of the treasures that are to be found in it. None surely can look at his Bible as he has it to-day (not simply a Bible open in his hands, but open to him by the Spirit of God) without realizing how much room there is yet in it for fresh explorations; how much there is in Scripture that has never yet fulfilled its character as "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Do we not need, as it would seem, some door to be opened yet into these many hitherto blank pages, every one of which should shine out with the light of God in them for our souls? For this, however, the first necessity is that we should be keep-

* The expression "key of David" may find further suggestiveness from its connection in Isa. xxii., from which it is quoted. There Shebna, the treasurer in Hezekiah's day, is to be set aside and replaced by Eliakim as ruler of the household. The meaning of Shebna is given as "youthfulness, vigor," and of Eliakim as "God is setting up." There was a good measure of outward activity and prosperity in Hezekiah's day which might well be described by this youthful vigor, of merely human energy. While Hezekiah was a man of faith and diligent, yet there are evident indications that the state of the nation was anything but satisfactory in the sight of God. Shebna is to be displaced by one whom God sets up—fully answering to Christ who must supersede all fleshly energy. Thus Sardis would answer to Shebna, none of its works perfect before God, its vigor merely carnal; while in Eliakim we see one who is "a nail in a sure place," who opens the door to the treasure-house of God, and orders all things in that house. Where His authority is recognized, how truly too does He open the door to His people to lead them out of Judaism, or of that which resembles it, into full and sweet fellowship one with another.—S. R.

ers of Christ's word; that it should have its practical place with us, that we should crave it *all*, and not allow ourselves to be willingly ignorant of any of that which is God's means of forming us in the mind of Christ, of giving communion with Himself, of sanctification. Hopeless it may seem to think of this in large portions of those Jewish scriptures which seem to be merely records of the past, of what for us could have little, if any, significance. What has hindered our getting possession of what must needs be shut up in these apparently barren portions? We may answer, in the first place, it is because of our unbelief as to there *being* anything there; and it should be simple that this is but dishonor to Him whose Word it is, and which, as His Word, must be "spirit and life" in every part of it. If we will not believe that He has given it all for spiritual profit, it must remain probable that we shall find no profit in it. According to our faith or unbelief it will be to us.

Of course, none can deny that the way in which these things are given to us implies the need of labor, of exercise of faith in waiting on God in order to possess ourselves of them. In proportion as our energy is small, we shall think the labor too great to be compensated by the profit. Yet, assuredly, God has made no mistake. He has given us that which was in His heart to give, and He has given it in the way in which He intended to give it. No doubt there can be found a very large consent of those most trusted in these matters who will unite to assure us that we must not think to find gospel everywhere in these old records. Take the mass of commentators even, and is it not plain, not merely that they have no help for us as to whole pages of the inspired Word, but that they do not even dream of help being given? Here are matters, it is thought, for the antiquarian, matters for those curious in literary research, matters as to which it is possible for some to exhibit whatever they may have in the way of learning; but alas, with all this, how small a crumb of comfort for the soul! If we dare not go beyond our guides, if we can only drink of the water which has been kept in their reservoirs for us, if we have no access to the living streams themselves, if there is not with us the longing of heart which *must* nevertheless have access, whatever hindrances may seem to be in the way of it, then it is no wonder if an open door here should be thought of as nothing but delusion; and we must go on to believe that God has given what none can find food in, and much that must seem as only a trial of our patience, if we set ourselves once or twice a year, as a duty, to go through it.

We must have faith, then, in what the grace of God has given us, in order to be able to get on with it; but more, we must have faith also in the ability He gives to possess ourselves of it. Here, how many questions naturally assail us! When we think of the centuries during which the Church has been in possession of the completed Word, and think again how little of unity of interpretation there is at the present time,—divisions only increased, as one might think, by coming to it,—divisions for which Rome reproaches Protantism, so far with justice: but her remedy is to take Scripture out of our hands altogether, and to give us only just what and how she may deem fit,—certainly any amount of division is incomparably better than this. Nevertheless, the ruin of everything seems only to become continually more manifest. New heresies start; creeds multiply; Scripture, as is the common urging of unbelief, is appealed to for all, and Satan can boast of the success he has in making that which is the truth itself in some way the apology for error everywhere. But what are we to conclude as we think of it all? That after all there is indeed before us an open door to enter into and take possession of the word of God, to an extent only limited by our lack of faith in Him? Is it humility even to judge others in the way this seems to necessitate? And is it not presumption on our part to think that we may even possibly succeed where the generations have so much and so uniformly failed? Nevertheless, there abides for us one word of Christ which, if we keep it, will outweigh them all: "And when the Spirit of truth is come, He shall lead you into *all* truth." Is this a sufficient assurance? Is the failure His or ours? Are we given up to failure? To take any such position as these is only, in one

hast ^okept my word, and hast ^pnot denied my name. Behold I will make them of the ²synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie; be-

*o cf. Jno. 14.
23.
p cf. Matt.
16. 15-17.
cf. Matt. 18.
20. q ch. 2. 9.*

way or another, to charge failure upon God Himself. No, rather the fault has been that we have trusted other guides more than this one sufficient One. We have given those whom God has given to us, in order to help us with the interpretation of His Word, a place of authority which belongs to nothing but to the Word itself. We have been the followers of men too much; and thus oftentimes the best meant attempts to preserve the truth to us have only resulted in hindrance and stagnation. If God has given a little revival, if He has recovered for us a few truths that we had lost, the way has been immediately to make that which we have the measure of everything; and this, enshrined in creeds and confessions, has been a sorer hindrance in the path of progress than we may be willing to allow that it could be.

Yet there is nothing wrong in a creed or a confession. If this embodies the *present* faith of those who put it forth, it may be, and should be, a help instead of a hindrance; but the moment it is made an authority for others, then it becomes prohibitory of progress, unless we can maintain that every detail of it is infallible. But we have rightly given up infallibility of the Church teaching; are we then to follow that which is confessedly fallible, as if it were infallible? We must hold consistently all through to this, that it is not the Church that teaches. God raises up teachers, in His mercy to all; but even here there is no infallibility in the teaching. The word for us is—*no*, it always was, “Let the prophets speak two or three, *and let the rest judge*.” We are to take heed *what* we hear, as well as *how* we hear; and the healthful exercise which is implied in this we cannot afford to do without. Creeds are, after all, forms of the truth dictated by men; and our faith must not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. God has not given us a creed. He has given us His Word. The creed, if it be authoritative, by its very existence says that Scripture is not enough; God has not taken sufficient care of His people; His Word is not as clear as we can make it; at least, it requires a wisdom which all have not, a learning which cannot be expected of the mass, in order to interpret it to all. Thus the babes are disqualified by their simplicity—those very babes to whom the apostle John says, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things, and need not that any one teach you.” Was he right in saying this? Is that also Christ’s word, which we have to keep?

It is no wonder, then, if the enemy has made the creed the means of division really, instead of unity; oftentimes that which maintains error instead of truth. Let us have our creeds, but let them be our own, and not the creeds of other men. Let us get from Scripture all that Scripture can put us in possession of, and that will practically be our creed—what we hold in living faith, and neither more nor less than that. But if it be said there is nothing then to hinder the spread of whatever heresy, this is only once more to proclaim the incompetence of Scripture and of the Holy Spirit. It is strange and sorrowful how those who can insist so rightly upon the need of an open Bible, and that “the Bible only is the religion of Protestants,” yet can, nevertheless, allow to any extent these additions to it, and proclaim the indecisiveness of that very Bible which is to be the religion of every one.

How important is this, then, that the Lord says to Philadelphia: “Thou hast kept My Word”! Not My Word as filtered through the thoughts of others; not My Word as certain trusted leaders represent it; not My Word in the measure that others may have learnt it; but only and all of that which the Spirit of God makes good to our souls. No doubt we shall be tested here, for God tests always the faith that He most approves and seeks to have from us. Can we trust Him, whatever others may say? Can we accept that as truth in which we have, perhaps, the mass of His people against us? If it be true that keeping the word of

the Church is only practically unbelief, what more is keeping the word of a Church-creed or the word of any others, whosoever they may be, but which is not made good as Christ's word to us? And let us notice here that we have no more right to shorten our creed to bring it within the bounds of those of others, than we have to accept that which is outside of what is ours, of what the Word and the Spirit of God have taught us.

How important it is here that there should be with us a readiness, nay, a desire, to receive all that is Christ's word, and to follow it whatever the cost may be! How many, alas, look on to see what may be the cost of receiving such or such a thing, and for whom such questions avail to prevent all honest searching of the Word, all desire to go further in a way that threatens to cost too much to follow! Here the word of the apostle assures us that we must add virtue (that is, courage) to our faith, in order to be able to add to that virtue knowledge. We must not only have, as men say, thus the courage of our convictions, but we must *have the courage to be open* to conviction, which, in the unknown quantity that may be involved, may demand much more than the convictions we at present have. How many have stopped short in the pursuit of that which would have been the greatest blessing to them because of such a fancied lion in the way! If Christ is to say to us, "Thou hast kept My Word," there must be no reserve, no making terms with Him who is our Lord and Master, and who has not delegated His authority to any teacher or set of teachers, any more than to the Church at large. We must keep here distinctly before us the need of thorough individuality. We cannot merge that aright even in a multitude of God's people, and we need to remember what is implied in the prohibition of going with the multitude to do evil. We may do this when we have, nevertheless, no thought of doing evil, but simply go with the multitude. We shall certainly have often in this way to go beyond our faith, if not to go contrary to it; and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Faith is as individual as possible. My faith is not yours, nor yours mine. Faith has to do with God, and with God alone; and in this sense all faith in men is out of place where God has spoken.

How much, then, is implied in even a little power to maintain such a path as this; to go on, however conscious of our weakness; to go on, and not to be stopped or turned back! And here, surely, the open door which Christ promises applies. All doors will open to the faith of the weakest one who still must at all costs be true to God; and it is well to notice here how thoroughly the Lord appeals to His people by the power of that which they have found in Himself—by the power of His claim over their souls. It is "My Word," "My name," "My patience," "My God," and "the city of My God," and "My new name." How conscious, in all this, Christ is of His power over the souls of those whom He is addressing! It is the distinctive character, one may surely say, of Philadelphia to have turned from all other confidences, all other authority, just to Himself. It is a protest, as one may say, against the negative character of mere Protestantism, which can go, as we know full well, with infidelity itself, with the various grades of denial of His name.

It is a thing for us to mark that apparently those whom the Lord addresses here have been tried, or will be tried, in some way by this denial of Christ's name. "Thou hast not denied" seems to suppose some temptation to denial, which may not, of course, have the utter grossness of what men are pleased to call "Unitarianism" now. Christ's name covers all that He is. It is the doctrine concerning Him, the doctrine therefore of His work. His name is Jesus—"Jehovah, Saviour"—just as much Saviour as Jehovah; and thus He was called Jesus because He would "save His people from their sins." And notice, moreover, that His name may be denied in deed as well as in word. The deliberate association with those that deny Him is practically the denial itself; for if He is just what His name imports, then the owning Him thus must be imperative also. How can one own God while denying Him His place as that—while consenting, anywhere and for any purpose whatever, to leave Him out? It is this

hold, I will make them to come and "worship before thy feet, and to know that I have "loved thee. Because thou hast "kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee "out of the hour of temptation which is

r cf. Isa. 49. 23. s cf. Jno. 17. 26. Jno. 15. 9, 10. cf. Eph. 5. 25-27. 1 ch. 1. 9; cf. Jas. 5. 7; cf. Heb. 10. 36, 37. u cf. Jno. 5. 24; cf. 1 Thess. 4.16, 17; cf. Jno. 14. 3.

that is being done by the false liberality of the day, without an apparent thought of what is meant by it. When the churches of the orthodox can be opened to Jewish rabbis, and Christians applaud this as the true spirit of Christianity itself, how near are the masses coming to shameless denial! How important it is to realize that God only gathers men to that Name, and that every gathering which has not thus the truth of what He is as the central attraction, the hold-fast that unites all together, is not a Christian gathering!

There is another word now, in which we are reminded of what first came into view in the address to Smyrna: "The synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but lie." In the view that we are taking of the addresses to the churches now, it may seem strange to find these again in such connection. Nor is it their blasphemy any more that is spoken of. The promise is now with regard to these: "Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." We may be little competent indeed to say how this, which must certainly be future, is to be fulfilled. We have certainly seen a revival of such things in the midst of Protestantism in the present day, but it seems more to the purpose to remind ourselves that, if there be a return to obedience to Christ, to the acknowledging of His Word, and to the seeking of true fellowship in separation from the merely professing world, (thus a return to the principles of the Church such as we find them in the beginning,) it is natural that we should find in some shape also the revival of that old antagonism which met the apostles already in those early days. It may not take just the same form as of old. Satan is not beggared yet in his resources; and if God is giving in any sense fresh light, we may surely understand that it is as an angel of light that he will come in to antagonize it. We have to speak perhaps more doubtfully here than elsewhere, although, as already said, it is simply a promise to Philadelphia in connection with such as those who, in Smyrna, certainly represent the Judaizing element in antagonism to the grace of God and to that most wondrous revelation of it which He has given us in the Church, that they shall at length acknowledge her in the love that Christ has to her, and the place His love has given her.

The words that follow now show evidently that the truth of the Lord's coming has, to some extent at least, revived. We know how long in the history of the Church there had ceased to be any real expectation of it. In the language of the parable, even the wise virgins slumbered; but now the time of waking up seems to be at least beginning. It is involved in the approbation here, "Thou hast kept the word of My patience."

The kingdom at present takes its character from that. It is, as in the first chapter of this book, "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ;" the kingdom in which He reigns who sits upon the Father's throne, waiting the appointed time until His enemies are made His footstool. The keeping the word of His patience implies that the truth of this is entered into. We have had promises before, of course, as to the overcomer in Thyatira; instructive as it is to find it there, surely, in the midnight times, in the dark ages, an anticipative cry raised, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" Nevertheless, it scarcely penetrated then the hearts and consciences of the saints. Now there is a positive commendation, the word of His patience is being kept; His people have learnt that the present time is but a waiting time, and have learnt more that longing of heart after Him. The promise in connection with it shows us also how near the end we have arrived: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of temptation which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try those that dwell upon the earth."

There can be no doubt to those who have listened in any wise to the voice of prophecy as to what this refers to. It is evidently that "time of trouble" such as never was, of which the Lord warns in His prophecy upon the mount of Olives. This and the parallel passage in Daniel (chap. xii. 1) have, no doubt, special reference to Israel, as the context shows. But in the seventh chapter of this book we find a company from all the nations who are before the throne, and who are distinctly named as those that come "out of the great tribulation." Thus it affects much more than Israel, and certainly must come practically upon the whole habitable world. It is especially, as spoken of here, for the trial of "those that dwell upon the earth;" and this is a phrase which characterizes some whose profession has been, at least impliedly, one of not belonging to the earth. They are, as in Pergamos, dwelling "where Satan's throne is;" and the whole character of the period following the removal of the Church to heaven is such as would necessarily make it specially apply to these. It is eminently an "hour of temptation," the time of the rise of the last and special antichrist, who sweeps away the masses of those who, when they had the truth, were without heart for it; whose pleasure was in mere unrighteousness (2 Thess. ii. 10-12). But the true Church is, as has been already shown, at that time with the Lord; and this throws light distinctly upon the promise here: "I will keep thee out of the hour of temptation which is about to come." Notice, not merely "out of the *temptation*," but out of the *hour* of it—out of the time in which the temptation is. To be kept out of the hour is a virtual promise of being taken to be with the Lord; and thus it follows here, "Behold, I come quickly." "Quickly" is the word now. Things are hastening on to that final catastrophe, and the Lord is just about to take His people to Himself, and this intensifies the urgency of the appeal, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."

Here is what shows us the special form of overcoming in connection with Philadelphia. At first sight one would naturally ask, What room for overcoming can there be where there is nothing but commendation on the Lord's part for those He is addressing? For the overcoming is, throughout here, not that overcoming of the world merely which faith enables for, but the overcoming in connection with the evils that have come into the Church. This is plain in most of these addresses. Smyrna may seem to be an exception to this, for there, undoubtedly, there is outside persecution; but there also there is an evil within, as we have seen already, that which the Lord calls "the synagogue of Satan," the party of those who are bent upon degrading the Church to a Jewish level. There is not only the roar of the lion, but the snare also, and both have to be overcome; but in Philadelphia, while "the synagogue of Satan" is indeed noticed, yet, as already said, there is no blasphemy on its part, nothing but a promise, so far as we can see, that they shall own the Lord's peculiar affection, which is at the same time His approbation, for the Philadelphian assembly. Thus there seems to be here no evil to overcome. Certainly there is no great power. Yet, with all the weakness, there is approbation all through. How, then, can there be overcoming? The answer is surely to be found in what we have just now. In this very exhortation to hold fast what they have, there is a necessary implication that there is the danger for them of not holding fast; and such words, we may be sure, are not in vain. The danger is not merely hypothetical, but something that the history of His people strongly emphasizes for us.

But who are the people, then? And what distinctly does Philadelphia mean? The only answer that can be given must necessarily be derived from the character ascribed to her here. Philadelphia includes all those who seek to be obedient to Christ's word, in all that this implies, allowing no word of man to be added to or substituted for it. That which is added to it becomes, in fact, something thus far substituted for it: the two things are one. Philadelphia speaks of the refusal of everything of this sort, in order to keep that which can be certified as the word of Christ, and that alone; connected with which also is the necessary aim after pure communion, for a fellowship of brethren, a recognition

"about to come upon the whole habitable world to try
those that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly:
hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy

v ch. 6.1, etc.
ch. 7. 14.
ch. 8.7, etc.
w cf. ch. 8.13.
x ch. 22.7, 12.
20. y ch. 2. 25; cf. 1 Cor. 15. 58.

of those that are truly Christ's, and thus, in some sense at least, a separation from the mere worldly profession which we find so largely in Sardis.

It would not be the place here to seek to reproduce the history of such a movement, which indeed would be easy to show. It began not so long after the Reformation times, when the weight of the worldly establishments favored by it began to be felt by the more spiritual. Indeed, how was it possible that this should not be felt? The conflict with the grosser forms of evil, while it went on, no doubt prevented full realization of it. The times were such that even the world came to be for the moment, so to speak, absorbed in the religious questions. The peril of Rome had been brought home to every one's door, and the hope of deliverance from her made the truth itself, which alone could deliver, a matter of encouraging attention on the part even of the mass. A sober estimate of things could hardly at the time be taken, but as this passed, and when the victory thus far was to a certain extent won, the eye that had been turned so much outside, as a matter of course, turned elsewhere, and the spiritual condition of the world-churches could not but press more and more heavily upon the godly in the midst of them.

If we are to take the character of things depicted in the address before us, we can have no doubt that there were various movements which could be characterized, at least more or less, as Philadelphian in character; and it is noticeable that in the beginning of these things certain truths tended to revive which had long been lost to view. With separation from the world-church, in the companies of believers thus brought together there was often recognized the liberty of ministry in these congregations. The unscriptural distinction of clergy from laity was refused, along with the exclusive right of preaching on the part of an ordained ministry; and with this there came the refusal of a liturgy and forms of worship distinctly as usurping the place of the Spirit as the true Leader of the people of God. Here and there the coming of the Lord became also a more practical reality.

But while we realize these things, the sorrowful lesson is continually forced upon us of how little man is competent to hold fast the best blessings that God has given him. It is just amid that which is best and most hopeful that we find what is necessarily thus the saddest failure, and the words of the Lord's warning press upon us, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." Such movements have constantly begun as real and gracious revivals in the power of God, soon, alas, to decline in power and spirituality, even with the very growth in number of those affected by them. God, on the other hand, has come in again and again to give fresh light, and perfect the truth already in measure known. Certain of these, also, have taken wider hold of the masses, while at the same time they have sadly changed their form as they have thus spread themselves amongst them: in widening they have lost depth. Through the broken barriers of the world-systems a false liberality has come in, which is but the imitation of that which is truly Christian, and which makes light of the very truth which is the sole means of true fellowship among any. One can only speak generally here of such matters as these, and the Spirit of God alone can give the right application, as He will to every heart sufficiently in earnest to apprehend. It is evident that there is encouragement which remains for us in the midst of that which would seem discouragement wholly. It is evident that we must not discredit with the failure the truth held by those who, nevertheless, have failed.

Amid all this the Lord's claim for His people to manifest individually their obedience to Himself only rings out the more clearly and the more urgently. It is a special appeal to every individual as such: "Hold fast that which thou hast,

^acrown. He that ^aovercometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall ^bgo no more out; and I will ^cwrite upon him the name of my God, and the name of the ^dcity of my God, the new Jeru-

^z cf. ch. 2. 10.
cf. Jas. 1. 12.
cf. 2 Tim. 4.
7, 8.
cf. 1 Cor. 3.
14.
cf. 1 Cor. 9.

25. ^a ver. 5, etc; cf. Gal. 2. 9; cf. 1 Kl. 7. 21. ^b cf. Ps. 23. 6; ^c tr. Heb. 13. 14. ^c ch. 22. 4; cf. Ex. 28. 36; ^c tr. ch. 18. 16. ^d cf. Ps. 87. 5 with Gal. 4. 26; cf. Ezek. 48. 35; ch. 21. 2.

that no one take thy crown." The crown will never be the portion of any *company*, even of the Lord's people. The special reward-crown is the recompense of truth and individual fidelity to Christ.

And let us notice here, also, what it is that we are called to hold fast. Sardis may be naturally called to repent in view of what she had received, but in Philadelphia's keeping the word of Christ there is found, not simply the abiding by what has been already received, the keeping a certain fixed and limited deposit of truth, but rather the listening to a living voice which leads on in necessary progress. If we will keep the word of Christ, if there is in us the heart to do this, then it will be found that we have a creed which is continually enlarging. The Word is becoming more and more to us a living voice that leads us on; and certainly there is no holding fast where there is no progress. A certain measure of truth held but not increased, tends inevitably to become less to the one who holds it. It becomes dulled by that sort of familiarity with it which demonstrates its nature by the very lack of desire for increase. Exercise about it is gone. We are established in it perhaps. We cannot, or think we cannot, be moved from it; but it no more calls up in us the energy that it once did, and thus the decline is already manifest: for as all error is connected together, so that one little point of it that we hold, followed out to its results, will blight all the truth that is in connection with it, so, on the other hand, all truth is so connected that every point in this way gained is a point of vantage, and gives us a view of that which is still beyond—a blessed, attractive view also, which leads us on to the attainment of what is not yet attained. It is still the apostle's rule, "Forgetting that which is behind, and pressing on to that which is before;" for indeed, is not all truth, in one way or another, just the knowledge of Christ Himself? and can there be any right pressing on after Himself which does not take advantage of that which He has given, in order to make Himself known to us, and to give us fellowship with Himself?

Thus the word of Christ and growth in knowledge of it become an inevitable necessity. God has not erred in His knowledge of our need and in that which He has given us, but of which we have not yet possessed ourselves. How can we even imagine what there may be for us stored up in that which we have to confess we know not what it is? How can we measure the unknown? Alas, in our estimate of what is essential and what is non-essential, let us remember that if we apply this to the formation in us of the mind of Christ, we must not tell Him that what we know *not* is not essential to know—that we can afford to leave it out and find no loss by it. Let us be sure that if we would have for ourselves that commendation which the Lord gives to Philadelphia, there must be that quick ear for everything He utters, or *would* utter to us, which will enable Him thus to lead us on. We may be sure that he who is truly a keeper of the word of Christ shall, in proportion as he is so, find that Word becoming more clear; He will emphasize for us the encouragement of this word, "I have set before thee an open door, and no one can shut it."

The promise to the overcomer is most emphatic and beautiful. The one that has but a little strength is to be made a pillar in the temple of God—"My God," says Christ—and to go no more out, and to have upon him the name of His God and the name of the city, the new Jerusalem, and Christ's new name. "A pillar in the temple of My God" may seem strange in view of what we have at the end of the book, when John tells us that he saw no temple in the city of God, "because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." There is no need of a shrine any more when God is so entirely enshrined in the hearts

saalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God,
and 'my new name. He that 'hath an ear, let him
hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies.

*e of ch. 19. 12
with ch. 2.
17.
f ver. 22, etc.*

of all there, "all" and "in all." God is at home with His people, and His people are all sons; there is no need therefore of restrictions such as have been known in time past. But on the other hand here we have plainly what is symbolical of a place which God fills, and where He is the Object of unceasing worship. Upon earth "the Church of the living God" is responsibly "the pillar and ground of the truth." Alas, she has signally failed in that responsibility, but here to the overcomer there is more than recovery. We cannot but think of those two pillars in the temple of Solomon, the name of the one being *Jachin*, and the other *Boaz*, significant names, which show what alone can constitute a pillar anywhere—*Jachin*, "He establishes," and *Boaz*, "in Him is strength." If we indeed always remembered this! The strength is not in His creatures, but in Himself; and it is He who establishes the soul—not even truth known apart from Him. The Philadelphian overcomer will be even thus a witness to the strength which has been given him, and to the grace which has made him what he is. Out of this temple he shall no more go, for it is not local, but the presence of God continually realized by the saint in glory; where forgetfulness even for a moment will be wholly impossible. Then there is identification with the name of God, Christ's God; that is, with God as displayed in Christ. On earth those who have the seal of God upon their foreheads are described as having the name of His Father written upon them. Thus they are proclaimed His, and He is seen in them; and this is the work of the Spirit to accomplish. Then there is identification with the city of God, the new Jerusalem, a heavenly, not an earthly habitation; the city in which is indeed the "foundation of peace," peace always abiding secure, never more to be assailed. The city upon earth was constantly in siege. The heavenly city is far above all possibility of this. Peace is based upon righteousness, and Christ is still and everywhere the true foundation of peace. Lastly, there is identification with Christ Himself, His new name written upon the overcomer, that name in which all His new relationships to the Church, His bride, His body, and the whole new creation, are told out.* He is not here Israel's Messiah simply. He is the Father of Eternity, the Lord of endless glory.

3. The addresses close with that to Laodicea; a name which strikes one painfully at the first glance, and the significance of which is easily seen. Laodicea is composed of two words, which unitedly mean either "the manners," "the right," or "the judgment, of the people." These are all in near connection with one another, and may all have their place in the meaning of what is before us. "People's rights"! Who does not know that this is the cry of the times? and no doubt not without much apparent justification for it, in a world full of oppression; a world in which "Might makes right" has been a constant motto, a principle really acted upon even where not acknowledged. How even the conscience itself goes with this plea of the downtrodden! Who can deny the awful abuse of power everywhere? And who cannot see that more and more, according to the democratic tendency of the times, the people are not merely pleading for but demanding a right to possess themselves of their rights? Who can wonder, either? Leave but God out (and that is, alas, what we find it in general so

* Considering Philadelphia as representing—as it surely does—a remnant testimony to Christ's truth in days of ruin and failure, how striking is the contrast between it in the eyes of the world and as rewarded in glory! What feebler, apparently, than the stand for truth—often a subject of scorn to the world: but it will be a pillar there. How significant the mention of the temple of God for those who refused the thought of any earthly sanctuary! They refused all names of man here; there they will have a triple name written by the Lord Himself—His God's, His city's, and His own new name. They confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims here; there the name of the heavenly city, with all that goes with it, will be inscribed upon them. And who can tell all that goes with that "new name" of our Lord Himself? To know Him then as we do not, and cannot, know Him now—who can measure the blessedness held out to the overcomer?—S. R.

very easy to do), why should the many accept this overbearing dominancy of the few? Why should the mere casual circumstances which few have ordained for themselves or had anything to say as to bringing about, make all the difference of luxury or penury among those sprung of a common parentage, and creatures alike of Him who is "no respecter of persons"? The case may be fairly argued, but what avails mere argument about it? The question is as to the remedy; and does it not seem as if the remedy were really in the hands of those who are the many against the few? Why should not might again make right, as it has done all through the world's history, and the people settle things with their own right hands?

But the question still remains, What sort of a settlement will be attained in this way? The masses have risen up before, and what has been accomplished? It was but a spasm of effort which exhausted itself as quickly, and things returned, as they ever seem to return, to their former condition; for these "people's rights"—*whose* rights are they? And who is to determine them? Each for himself, or the many for the few? Can one think there will be in this case righteous principles?—any less wrong? Liberty, equality and fraternity have been written in deep red letters, as we know; and the awful horror of that brief moment in which they were so, scarcely fades with the time that has elapsed since then. Who is to determine the rights, and the extent of them? Who shall apportion to each his due in a way that shall give satisfaction, perhaps, even to any? The world is full of oppression and wrong. Granted. Let the conscience be rightly before God, and there is in each of us that which will point out the cause, and convince one of the inveteracy of the evil. Who can trust himself? And he that trusts himself most, will *he* be the person most trusted by others? No; it is sin that is at the bottom of the whole, however little, indeed, we may care to know it. It is easier, no doubt, to own it for others than for ourselves; but thus those who own it for us will always be in the majority, and shall not the majority decide?

Scripture has written out in full the condemnation, and our only hope lies, after all, in submitting to Scripture. We are sinners, and this is what has wrecked our fortunes; this is what has brought clouds and darkness over the face of God Himself, and often made His ways so little what we think to be worthy of Him. Alas, we are taking up our own cause simply, in judging thus; and we cannot be trusted in our own cause to give right judgment. Yet is not the world wrong? Scripture speaks, as we know, in the strongest way about this. The socialist and the anarchist can both appeal to the denunciations of Scripture, and have claimed even the Son of man Himself as one with them because of His denunciations of the wrong that is everywhere. Let them look more deeply, and they will find that they are at total issue with Him in regard to the remedy. Power was in His own hands. Did He use it? We know the cross is His emblem. That speaks, if we have learnt it aright, of His submission to the judgment upon Him for their sin, taking that sin Himself in His love to redeem them. But His remedy, then, is to bow, not indeed to man, but to God; or if to man, yet only as in obedience to God. Here is the way out, and the only way. We suffer for our sins. Be it so. Let us own them then, and let Him be the Judge, and let us accept that judgment. Let us not plead rights which, if we argue them out before Him, will prove so fatally against us. The end of all is in His hand; and happy is the one who has learnt to leave it there, and to leave it there in confidence.

But this plea of people's rights is manifestly in connection, not merely with the politics of the time, but with the Church of God; and it has, alas, made these so much its own principles! With politics, as such, we would not expect to have much to do in these addresses to the churches; but if the world and the Church have come together so largely, as in truth they have,—when men can talk about a Christian world, and the powers of the earth have come to be practically the so-called "Christian powers,"—then how is it possible to keep politics out of the Church? or to prevent the universal spirit of unrest entering into

3 (14-22):
Laodicea.
Fullness,
so as to
have no
need of
Christ; He,
too, sated with their false pretenses, spews them out.

3. And to the angel of the assembly in Laodicea, write :
—These things saith the ^gAmen, the ^hfaithful and true
witness, the ⁱbeginning of the creation of God. I know
thy works, that thou art ^jneither cold nor hot. I

g cf. 2 Cor. 1.
20.
h ch. 1. 5.
ch. 19. 11.
i Col. 1. 15-
18.
j cf. ch. 21. 5.
cf. Gal. 6. 15.
cf. Matt. 24. 12.

cf. 2 Cor. 5. 17. *j* cf. 2 Cor. 1. 17; cf. 2 Tim. 3. 5; cf. Matt. 24. 12.

the most purely ecclesiastical questions? It is certain that to-day there is a democratic tendency in religion as in all else. The ministry of the Church has long been a systematically hired service, and here, as elsewhere, the masses are rising up, themselves to assert their rights against the pretentious claims of the hierarchy. The Church once ruled, but the Church rules no longer. Alas, it is true that when the Church ruled most absolutely, those were the dark ages for mankind. This rule of the Church did not indeed, as we know, mean a rule of the people, but of a class which had arrogated to itself the claim to be this, and had trodden down the people into the very dust. What wonder that the people should be now asserting themselves here also? Not, indeed, to insist upon Scriptural ruling in the things of God, but upon their own rights, as the masses against the few. Ministry, it is true, means service and not ruling; but if the service be, as by common consent it has so long been, alas, a service of hire, why should not the people claim their money's worth and decide which suits them, the kind of thing they want to hear, and the men that they want to listen to? For what comes of this they cannot indeed plead Scripture, except that which they would not like to fulfil as a prediction, that "men shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn their ears from the truth and be turned to fables." Bring the Church and the world together, as it must surely be plain to any spiritual mind that they are largely so—practically, even where not in theory; what must be the outcome when the purse rules and the popular voice decides what they care to listen to?

But before we go further, let us look at the address to Laodicea, and see what the picture is that it presents to us. Here Christ, as always, speaks in suited character for that which He is addressing. He is here "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:" words that again are, on the one hand, a needed warning; on the other hand, a sweet encouragement to those who can accept the warning. He is the Amen, as the apostle says to the Corinthians: "All the promises of God in Him are yea," and therefore "through Him also is the amen, unto the glory of God through us" (2 Cor. i. 20, R. V.); that is, as the revised reading has it, that in Christ there is the positive assurance of every promise of God, and that which awakens, therefore, in His people the amen, their affirmation of the assurance which they have found in Him. Here, therefore, He is Himself "the Amen." Christ is the answer from the hearts of His people as to the truth of every promise of God, and we may add surely, as to the Church, of every word that He has spoken; His Word abides; not a thing to be trifled with, to be twisted at men's pleasure, and not to be set aside. Christ is thus Himself "the faithful and true Witness." How solemn and yet how cheering the reminder, when the witness of His people on earth has failed, to know that there is One who abides true to Himself, true to God, true to us therefore, in all possible interests—His witness, that which is to be listened to, however men may contradict! This, of course, is practically the affirmation of the truth of Scripture, of that which is His Word throughout, but in which, as we know, men are claiming to find a human element which soon comes to be something that is quite other than "faithful and true," and which is used to obscure His witness: for it is manifest that if we cannot fully trust the terms of that document in which all His own witness is recorded for us, then this of necessity must partake of such uncertainty as all the record has. It is of no use affirming that still Christ remains true when we cannot produce what we can positively say are His own true words. If there be not an absolutely faithful report, then we have practically lost the faithful Witness Himself.

^kwould thou wert cold or hot. So, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to ^lspew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am ^mrich, and have grown rich, and have need of nothing, and ⁿknowest not that *thou* art the wretched and miserable one, even ^opoor and ^pblind and ^qnaked; I

k cf. 1Kl. 18. 21.
l cf. Matt. 12. 30.
m cf. Ezek. 16. 59.
n cf. Matt. 23. 38.
o cf. ch. 18. 21. etc.

m cf. 1 Cor. 4. 8; *cf.* Lk. 6. 24; *cf.* Ezek. 16. 15, etc.; *cf.* Jas. 5. 1, 2. *n* cf. Hos. 7. 9; *cf.* Jno. 9. 39-41. *o* cf. Lk. 16. 19, 23. *p* cf. 1 Cor. 2. 14; *cf.* Matt. 13. 15. *q* cf. Gen. 3. 7; *cf.* ch. 16. 15.

The Lord's last title here, "The beginning of the creation of God," speaks, of course, of *new* creation. The old, stained with sin, is no longer recognized as His. In fact, new creation was always that which was in His thoughts, which the fall, therefore, could never mar nor set aside—rather, was a means, under the controlling hand of God, of developing. Here Christ Himself is the true beginning of it. He is the One from whom it has its origin; and those who belong to it are created in Him, as the apostle expresses it in Ephesians (chap. ii. 10); and He it is who abides—for the one renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him—"where there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." "People's rights" have no place here, clearly, but God's grace only. At Laodicea He is therefore outside the door, though lingering yet in His grace, if possibly any one may at last give Him admittance.

Thus we see that in Laodicea they have got far away from all that is real with God, among the shadows of their own vain imaginations. But it is noticeable here that we have not the death-coldness of Sardis; they are simply lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. The solemn thing is that the Lord estimates this as a *worse* condition than absolute coldness; and we may see in this, no doubt, that the revival in Philadelphia has thus affected them. Even that which is dead, if it is under the influence of the heat, can be warmed up, but not to *vital* warmth; and this is the condition now. In fact, they are valuing themselves upon what they have attained; recovered truth has become in a certain sense their possession, and they value themselves accordingly upon it. In their own apprehension they are rich, and have been growing rich; nay, they have need of nothing. There is perfect self-complacency just at the time when the Lord is saying, "I am about to spew thee out of My mouth." These things, indeed, go perfectly together: the condition here is that of a professed spirituality, which, by its profession, betrays itself: for, even with regard to knowledge, "If a man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know;" and "if a man thinketh that he is anything when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." That is God's estimate of man, which the truly spiritual has made his own. "We are the circumcision, who worship God by the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." But alas, how hard it is to be thoroughly convinced that all self-confidence is confidence in the flesh!

Thank God, we are rich enough in Christ to be able to contemplate our own poverty without dismay. Our riches are in Him, and here we can boast as much as we will—the more the better; but the one who in any other sense can say, "I am rich," may be sure that this is but the mere unconsciousness of one who is "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Yet a common pretension of the present day, and which is found in various forms, is a pretension to perfection, which necessarily ignores the standard of perfection which God has given us: for while it is true that "he that abideth in Christ ought himself also so to walk even as He walked," yet who could venture to say, with the full consciousness of the perfection that is set before him, that he has attained it? That faith from which all true and acceptable work is produced is a renunciation of self, in the very fact that it turns off to Another; and every whit of confidence in one's self is just so much taken from that which is due to Him who alone can be the rightful confidence of the saint. It is true that there

counsel thee to "buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and "white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be manifested; and "eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I "love

r cf. Isa. 55. 1.
cf. Matt. 25.
9.

s cf. ver. 4.
cf. ch. 19. 8.
cf. Lk. 15. 22
t cf. Jno. 9
6, 7.

cf. 2 Pet. 1. 9, 10. *u* Heb. 12. 6; Prov. 3. 12.

are fruits of the Spirit. We need not ignore that. Nay, it would be a wrong to the Spirit Himself to ignore it. Yet even so, it is not the work of the Spirit to make us contemplate this, nor can we be trusted to do so. It was through pride, as the apostle tells us (1 Tim. iii. 6), that Satan fell from the height in which he was created, to the place of being the Satan that he is, the constant adversary of God and man. "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty. Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom because of thy brightness" (Ezek. xxviii. 17) are the words of God apparently as to this fallen being himself; but whether or not, the lesson is the same.

There is in all this self-occupation a fearful danger which Christians are painfully slow to realize. The subtle Pharisaism of a good self—justified as it is sought to be by the necessity of holiness and fruitfulness for God—will ensnare the saint for whom the gross forms of sin have no attraction; and with it all there will be constantly found a real depreciation of Christ,—to call it by no worse name,—in order that this self-satisfaction may be able to live in the dimmed glory of this Presence. Thus, not only have we the positive heresies of those who, with Irving, assert that the Lord had a fallen nature, which He had to conquer, as we have to conquer ours, but where this is not taught, yet that which the law discovered to the apostle (that the lust forbidden by it was sin) is denied, and the evil which, after all, is discovered within is imputed to Satan instead of to one's self; and it is urged that Christ was similarly tempted of Satan. A Laodiceanism of this spirit is thus manifested in the place which it gives the really perfect One; and along with this naturally goes the assumption that those who thus no longer need the discipline of sickness and suffering have therefore title (through the work of Christ, no doubt), if they have faith, to claim exemption from it. Thus the plain Sadduceism of infidelized Christianity stalks abroad in company with the highest pretension of Pharisaism.

"I counsel thee," says the Lord, "to buy of Me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be manifested; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see." The gold is that which seems everywhere to speak of divine glory. In the ark it covered the shittim wood, the symbol of the Lord's humanity; and the golden cherubim are spoken of by the apostle as "the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." Divine glory is the display of what God is in nature, and for us it is in the face of Him now revealed to us as the true image of God. It is in Him indeed that we find all riches for the Christian; for it is as we behold thus "the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." The whole power of sanctification lies in this, and the white garments of which He goes on to speak here are evidently in close connection with this. They typify, as always in Revelation, the practical righteousness which we see in the nineteenth chapter, as that with which it is given the bride to be arrayed. But note, these white garments have to be washed and *made* white in the blood of the Lamb (chap. vii. 14). The eye-salve is, of course, that which the Spirit furnishes, and the eyes thus anointed have one object alone, from which they would never be diverted, the light of a glory by which alone all other things are rightly seen. The Lord counsels these Laodiceans to *buy* these things. They are too rich and well-to-do to be asked to receive them freely. Nevertheless, the only purchase here is "without money and without price;" for if in fact to gain these things may cost us much, it is only the sacrifice of the rags of paper money, which was never of any real value,

I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and ^vrepent. Behold, I ^wstand at the door and knock. If any one ^xhear my voice and ^yopen the door, I will ^zcome in to him and ^asup with him, and ^bhe with me. He that ^covercometh, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also ^dovercame, and have sat down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ^eear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies.

v ch. 2. 5.
w cf. Song.
5. 2.
x cf. Lk. 12.
36.
y cf. Jno. 5.24.
12.
z cf. Acts 16.
14.
a cf. Jno. 14.
23.
b cf. Lk. 19.
5, 6.
c cf. Lk. 5.
29-32.

b cf. Lk. 15. 2; cf. Matt. 8. 11; cf. ch. 19. 9. c ch. 2. 7, etc; ch. 20. 4; cf. Matt. 19. 28.
d cf. ch. 5. 5; cf. Jno. 16. 33; cf. Jno. 17. 4, 5; cf. Heb. 1. 3. e ch. 2. 29, etc.

and which, when we see with the apostle, we count it loss, and therefore gain to lose.

This, then, is the character of Laodiceanism. It is a sign that the patience of the Lord is running out. Yet still He lingers, for His heart has not wandered, if that of His people has. "As many as I love," He says, "I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent." Still He expects no repentance of the mass. All is individual now. He is outside the door as a stranger, knocking; but if any one shall hear His voice and open the door, He will come in to him and will sup with him. Outside the door as a whole, yet it is evident that it is only the individual door that any one can open; while, as to the mass, it is already irrevocably said, "I am about to spew thee out of My mouth." Thus the threat which we find at the beginning, of the removal of the candlestick, is at last to be fulfilled. He has indeed had long patience, but there is here no true witness for Him which He can acknowledge. Thus the Church is to be set aside from its place as the responsible witness for Him upon the earth. Actually, the true saints are to be removed to heaven. This is for them but pure grace. It is the accomplishment of a promise which, the more fully the heart is His, is the more joyfully expected. But for the mass it is rejection, and only that. Nauseous in its lukewarmness to the Lord, He is going to spew it out of His mouth. Christianity proper is ended when the Lord gathers His people to Himself; yet the Christian profession, entirely empty though it may be then, may go on for a while yet; soon, however, to end in open apostasy. The history of it we shall have in the chapters that follow.

For the overcomer there is yet one final word. "To him," says the Lord, "will I give to sit with Me in My throne; as I also overcame, and have sat down with My Father on His throne." This is the announcement of the change which is coming about. On the Father's throne, though the Lord reigns, yet it is His waiting time: "Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool" (Ps. cx. 1). That is the distinct announcement of the time during which the King of Israel, recognized as that, shall nevertheless not be in possession of His kingdom. The sitting upon the Father's throne is a higher dignity, and the kingdom is a wider one. Manifestly, it is what is His by personal right alone, and which He cannot share even with others. Yet He has overcome to reach that place. Although His by natural right, yet He reaches it now as having accomplished a blessed work for God, which was verily a conflict. The strife between good and evil has been in His hand to work out to a conclusion, and He has virtually, though not yet actually, concluded it. He is upon the throne as having vindicated the right, as having glorified God in His ways and attributes, as having removed sin as a hindrance out of the way altogether; nay, as having made sin itself yield its tribute to the glory of the Eternal. Yet still He waits. He is to have a throne as Son of man, holding it in the nature in which He has wrought His triumph. He is to subject all things to God; to be thus "the Father of Eternity," according to the title by which Isaiah announces Him (chap. ix. 6); and this, too, is something much wider than the possession of David's throne would indicate. It is the throne of the Son of man, of One who has linked Himself with humanity, and who must therefore take up every

question which affects man or the relation of God to man. But thus He has a human throne, and there He can have those whom in this way He can call "brethren," and who can be associated with Him upon this throne which now He is going to take. All this is the intimation of what is before us in what immediately follows now—"things that are" having come to an end, and a very different state of things ensuing, in which the Church is no more recognized upon earth, and the elders are upon their thrones around the throne of God.

Laodicea closes the history of the Church on earth, and closes it, evidently, not in triumph, according to the expectation of so many still, but in judgment of the mass at the hands of the Lord Himself. Laodicea—"people's rights"—is no less, and even on that account, "people's judgment" also. The Christian dispensation, with all the grace of which it speaks, nevertheless ends as the legal dispensation ended. "Cease ye from man" is the moral throughout, a terribly sad and humiliating one if we go no further; but if "he that glorieth" may no more glory in man, there remains still the unfailing Object to glory in:—"he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." And yet here too, wonderful to say, we find a Man, and the Son of man, a Man who has not failed and will not fail; a Man in whom the early promise of creation has been more than fulfilled; a Man who, after all, eclipses the brightness of those heavens, whose glory might seem to make it strange indeed that God should visit him;—man, and even the Son of man, whom God hath made a little lower than the angels, to crown Him with glory and honor; under whose feet not simply the beasts of the earth are put, but who is at the same time the Head of all creation, and the One in whom God Himself is manifest in the full glory of His Godhead.

DIV. 2.

WE are but following the division of the book, which the Lord's own words imply, into "the things that are," and "the things that are about to be after these." It is not "hereafter," as in our common version; which might be indefinitely, at some future time. The words intimate a connection between the two parts of Revelation such as we should naturally suppose, at least if the epistles to the churches are in themselves prophetic. Even if it were not so, and the addresses simply had to do with existing churches of the time of the prophet, yet we should see no reason for any great break, although the coming to pass "*after these*" would, as such, naturally lose much of its significance. But if, as we may be well assured from the introduction to the whole book, all of it is a prophecy, and if we have found this confirmed in the application, as we surely have; if these addresses carry us down, therefore, until the coming of the Lord, which is more and more pressed upon us as we reach the end, then the things that follow are, of course, things taking place after the removal of the Church, as already implied in the Lord's promise to Philadelphia. What we must expect, therefore, if these things are so, is that entire change as to things on earth which would result from the Church being absent from it; which would mean the taking up afresh of Israel, and with Israel the earth once more.

The Church is heavenly. It is a gathering out of the world, which does not affect, at least savingly, the world as such. As we have seen, also, the Lord's coming for His people is spoken of as the promise of the Morning Star, which does not bring the day to the earth, although it heralds the approach of it. We have but to look at the Old Testament prophecies in order to see that for the blessing of the earth Israel must be blessed, as Hosea distinctly says (chap. ii. 14-23) that the Lord "will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her, and give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor" (the place of judgment) "for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call Me Ishi" (my husband), "and shalt call Me no more Baali" (my lord); "for I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be

remembered by their name." We see that this is absolute assurance of their being brought back into relationship with God abidingly, and into a nearer relationship than they have ever known before.

The prophet goes on: "And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." Nothing can possibly be more decisive than this is, and there follows the general blessing for the earth resultant: "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. And I will sow her unto Me in the earth" (the application of that name Jezreel, which means "the seed of God," or "God shall sow"); "and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." It is not possible, one would say, to pervert this in the way which has been so common—reading "the Church" instead of "Israel"; and this is the language of the Old Testament generally. Thus Isaiah says (chap. xxvii. 6): "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: *Israel* shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." These are the promises which the apostle to the Gentiles has told us distinctly (Rom. ix. 3, 4) belong to his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, (not Spirit) who are Israelites; and they assure us not only of the conversion of Israel, but of their distinctly being reinstated in the place of peculiar blessing, and being made instrumental to the blessing of the whole earth. Thus Israel becomes Jezreel, "the seed of God."

This, then, is the character of things that we must expect in the prophecies to follow this. The Church is no more seen upon earth, but we have, in a remarkable introduction to the things that follow, the picture of the redeemed in heaven occupying already their thrones as kings and priests to God, from whence we see them issuing in the nineteenth chapter, in the train of the white-horsed Rider; that is, accompanying Christ when He comes to the earth in judgment. The whole character of the intermediate time will be in harmony with this. The Church gone, there will only remain, as representing the one Christian profession, Babylon the Great, in full reality then "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

SUBD. 1.

The first subdivision carries us to the end of the opening of the seals, which therefore fully opens the book. All prior to this must therefore be of an introductory nature. The book is not fully open until every seal is broken. He who opens them is in heaven, the Object of all the worship there; and it is heaven that now manifestly rules upon earth. God, of course, has never given up His throne, and could not do so. Nevertheless, He has permitted things, apparently, to go on as if He knew nothing of what was doing there. According to the parable in the Gospel of Mark (chap. iv. 26-29), "So is the kingdom of God as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. . . . But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." The change which takes place now indicates that the harvest of the earth is at hand. The power which governs all is distinctly shown as being in heaven. The evil may assume, and does assume, a more malignant character even than before, but there goes forth now judgment that is to arrest it, at the call of the cherubim, the executors of the government of God on earth.

DIVISION 2. (Chaps. iv.-xii.)

Things that come to pass after these. The salvation of Israel and the earth.

SUBDIVISION 1. (Chaps. iv.-viii. 5.)

The sources of power.

SECTION 1. (Chaps. iv., v.)

The opening of divine counsels by the Lion of Judah in the midst of the throne.

1 (iv.): The throne of God in necessary righteousness but girdled with promise.
1 (1-3): The call and the divine throne.

1. ¹ **A**FTER these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard as of the trumpet speaking with me, saying,

f cf. ch. 1. 19.
cf. 2 Thess. 1. 7-10.
g cf. Lk. 23. 45.
cf. Heb. 10. 19.
h ch. 1. 10.

Sec. 1.

It is in perfect correspondence with all this, that when we look at the One by whom the book of the divine counsels is now opened, we find, in Him who is in the midst of the throne of God, the Lion of Judah; a significant term, which as applied to Christ can hardly be missed. *Judah's Lion has risen up.* Christ is taking a place in relationship to Israel; and "the times of the Gentiles" are necessarily come to an end.

This is a most important change: for when God gave up His manifest throne in Israel, and Ezekiel had seen the glory finally leave the city, Daniel (who was contemporary of Ezekiel) next represents to us the transference of power to the Gentiles, Nebuchadnezzar being distinctly given title over the earth, a title which the successive empires that the prophet sees following the Babylonian inherit from him. This gives us "the times of the Gentiles;" God being now spoken of in Daniel as "the God of heaven," as one who had left the earth, so to speak—as driven out by the sins of His professing people. This is coincident, as the Lord shows us, with the treading down of Jerusalem (Luke xxi. 24). Jebusite feet are again upon her: "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Immediately after this, the Lord speaks of "signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth;" and then they are to "see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Power is now in the hands of One who is truly the King of kings, and this of necessity shows us how we are to take the sealing of the 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel; and the view of the Gentile company following in the same vision only makes their Israelitish character stand out the more completely. The Church, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, is passed from the earth, and the old distinctions are obtaining again. One may say that as it is the Lion of Judah who opens the seals, and therefore gives us to realize these counsels of God, so it is only as we discern the Lord in this character here that the book will practically open to us—that we shall be able to see what is being put before us.

1. The first thing now before us is the throne of God; not indeed as it was in Israel, but the higher throne, in heaven. It is seen as manifested in necessary righteousness, therefore in judgment, because of the condition of the earth, but yet girdled with the bow of promise, which limits the judgment, and shows the blessing which is to result from it.

¹ "After these things," says the apostle, (using the very words which remind us of that division of the book which has been already given) "I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven; and the first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee what must take place after these things." This is something which in all Scripture we have not had before—not only a door opened in heaven, but the prophet called

up there, in order to see from that point of view (from whence alone things can be fully comprehended) what is now going to take place. Heaven has been opened before this. Enoch and Elijah went there of old, and the assurance of this has been given for the comfort of many generations since; but there was but the fact that they had gone there. No voice came back from heaven as the result. When everything had gone utterly to wreck in Israel, and Ezekiel was given to see the end in judgment, "the heavens were opened," says the prophet, and "I saw visions of God;" but he was not called up there; and the glory which he saw come forth went back without any new revelation of the place from which it came.

When our Lord was born the heavens were again opened, characteristically now to simple shepherds in the field, and the angels celebrated openly that good pleasure of God in men which has ever since characterized the revelation for us.

When, after His resurrection, the Lord went up, it was revealed that now a Man sat upon the right hand of God. Henceforth an opened heaven is that which is peculiarly characteristic of the present blessing. Stephen, under the stones of his persecutors, is given to see heaven opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God—a glorious gleam of brightness which transfigures, as well it might, his dying face.

Still, there is a certain reticence. No one who has been there comes back; until Paul, the apostle of the mysteries, can at last tell us of his being caught up (2 Cor. xii.). He knows not, indeed, "whether in the body or out of the body," but he has been there, and heard "unspeakable things," which it was not lawful for him to utter. The vision, whatever it was, is for himself alone. He has not been there as a prophet, but simply as a man in Christ. The blessing of it, no doubt, is in some sense for us, but it is equally plain that there is no communication. But now there is a prophet caught up, whose lips are no longer to be sealed. We are, so to speak, to be transported with him into that blessed place into which he goes. We are permitted at last, as we may say, to breathe the atmosphere of heaven, and to hear the voices of its inhabitants. But there is more than this, and we have a fuller interest in it, as we are directly shown.

John has already spoken of himself as in some sense the representative of the Church at large. He is the recipient, as we know, of this divine communication to Christ's servants, and he associates himself with these as their fellow-servant, and partaker with them in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Christ. It is John, let us remember also, of whom the Lord had said, in contrast to what He had announced to Peter, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" They could not read this enigma, and thought evidently that the Lord had said that that disciple should not die; a mistake against which he himself immediately cautions us. Nevertheless, in some sense John was, as we see, to go on to the coming of the Lord. He is the one who is given here to anticipate that blessed time; thus in his own person again, as it were, representing that Church which abides on earth as a company waiting for the Lord, against which the gates of hades cannot prevail, but which is to be caught up to meet Him—the antitypical Enoch of this later time. In fact, everything reminds us here of how the Lord will take His own to Himself. It is "a voice of a trumpet" speaking with him, that calls him up, the anticipation of that last trump which will awaken the sleeping saints, and call the living, with them, to their meeting with the Lord. It need be no wonder, then, if, when he is there, he finds himself as it were part of a company of redeemed, who are there also with him.

There is, indeed, no direct prophecy of that wondrous event which the apostle has described for us in the first epistle to the Thessalonians. There is a certain mystery attaching to it all, a mystery which we are called upon, as it were, to consider and penetrate; for all God's parables and deep sayings are to furnish us with wisdom—not to take wisdom from us. We are left to a certain exer-

Come up hither, and I will 'show thee what must take place after these things. Immediately I 'became in the Spirit; and behold, a *throne was set in heaven, and

i ch. 1. 19.
cf. ch. 3. 10.
j ch. 1. 10.
k cf. ch. 3. 21.
l cf. ch. 22. 3.
Ps. 103. 19.

cise about them, which is meant as a test for the state of soul in which we are, and without which Scripture will never have the blessing which God designs for us from it. No doubt also, in this way, a certain latitude, if one may so say, is permitted to us, which leaves room for that historical application to Christian times of the things which are before us here, which we shall have more to consider in the future, but which already has been spoken of as something naturally to be expected from what is inherent in the character of prophecy itself; the things that are around us being in this way the foreshadowing, with a necessary limitation, of the things to come—a foreshadow that should have true interest for us, limited as it necessarily must be; for, as with Israel's shadows, we must not be allowed to mistake the shadow for the substance. It cannot even be the perfect image of the things therefore,—but we shall have to speak of this more at another time.

What we see here is simply the prophet caught up, and with no idea, such as in the case of the apostle Paul is suggested, of a possible bodily taking up into these heavenly scenes. This, for us at least, is not needed. It is what he saw and heard that we are to be occupied with; and as to the manner of it, it is sufficient to say, as he says here, "Immediately I became in the Spirit." But he had already said this in connection with his first vision, which was upon the earth; the being in the Spirit simply assuring us that the Spirit was, as it were, eyes and ears to him, so that all was definitely secured and perfect. What he was as man was to be no hindrance to this. When God would reveal, He takes perfect care that no "human element" entering in shall mar the revelation. John became then in the Spirit. It is evidently a new beginning of his being so. It is an entirely new series of visions that he is to behold; and immediately there is before him a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne.

In Scripture the introduction to a book, or to any part of a book, will be found to give the character of that which follows. In this way we are helped to seize the central point, that point of view which, when we have it, puts other things in proper connection with it. Here, a throne set in heaven is characteristic of the whole book, but more especially of that part upon which we are entering now. Revelation, as a fifth part of the New Testament Pentateuch, is necessarily that which gives us the divine ways in government; and if we divide this number 5 into its two parts, we have, as must be quite familiar to us, 4 + 1, the number of the creature with the number of God; the weak, therefore, with the Strong; which gives us necessarily responsibility to God on the one hand, as it declares on the other the power of that government with which this responsibility has to do. But everything is characterized by the throne here. God Himself, although spoken of as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not appear even once as "our Father." It is not, of course, that He is not fully this, but we are in a different line of things from what this would speak of.

We therefore naturally come into the Old Testament connections; for the government of God is that of which the law necessarily speaks. Thus we find God as Jehovah, the One who is, and was, and is to come, which is but the interpretation of that name. So, also, He is the Almighty, as He declared Himself to Abraham, power being the first and necessary thought in connection with all real sovereignty. Again, as we shall find, it is characteristic that the white raiment of the saints is not that of which we habitually think—our righteousness in Christ, or Christ our righteousness—but it is a righteousness governmentally awarded, and the robe requires to be washed—washed in the blood of Christ—in order that it may be the pure white needed for the presence of God. Everything is in character thus from beginning to end, even in that where we should least expect to find it, in that final city of God in which we shall find indeed our home,

one sitting upon the throne; and he that sat was ^llike in appearance to a jasper and a sardine stone; and a ^mrainbow was round about the throne in appearance like unto an ⁿemerald.

l cf. ch. 21. 11.
cf. Ezek. 1.
26, 27.
m cf. Ezek.
1. 28.
cf. Gen. 9.
13-17.

cf. Is. 40. 1, 2. *n* cf. Ps. 72. 6.

the central blessedness of the Father's house; and yet the thought of government is everywhere in it. The measures and numbers attaching to the city all give us the 12 which speaks of manifest divine government; and here we have not children with the Spirit of adoption, but worshipers praising, and servants serving. Of course this is all in perfect harmony with that place of near relationship which, in His goodness, God has given us. We worship the Father; and service is that which belongs in the fullest way to children. Nevertheless, the line of things which is before us is quite distinct.

A throne, then, is set in heaven, and One sits upon the throne; with a certain necessary mystery as to Him, for here is One dwelling in the light unapproachable, who in His innermost glory no man hath seen or can see. Yet there are images which convey to us what we may realize as to Him; and to us it is perfectly natural that these images should speak of Him as redemption has declared Him. This is what seems to be the thought of the jasper and the sardine stone. Gems, as we have seen in the high priest's breastplate long since, are pictures to us of God in His various attributes, so far as He can be displayed to us; and the names written upon these stones, the names of His people, show in what connection He has manifested Himself. The jewels are the lights of Him who is the Father of lights, in the perfect ray of light itself too bright for us, but tempered in a way which brings out glories that would otherwise be hidden; the many-hued manifestation of the light—the light spread before us in its component rays. As it is to man the revelation is, so that this may be perfect as possible, it is in man that the revelation is, and Christ is therefore the blessed revealer. It is of this revelation of God in Christ, as it would seem, that the jasper and the sardine speak; for the jasper does not seem to be what we ordinarily call this. Its light is not as it is spoken of here (chap. xxi. 11), "clear as crystal," which scarcely suits its banded appearance. Ebrard has therefore suggested the diamond, which seems most perfectly to suit what is said of the jasper here. It is indeed, like the crystal light itself, as suited as we could imagine to that which is said to image the glory of God. But there is another character of the diamond which seems to have escaped notice, and yet it gives us, as it were, the very heart of the matter. The diamond, as is well known, is crystalized carbon, which we find, in the pure form, as graphite, the black lead of our pencils.

Carbon exists in these opposite conditions. In one form the symbol of divine glory, it might in the other be naturally the symbol of sin and evil. These two things, moreover, God's grace has shown us to be in strange and intimate connection with one another; for how could God's grace display itself other than in connection with sin and evil? And it is striking to find here also that carbon is an element characteristic of all organic products, so that organic chemistry has been called "the chemistry of the carbon compounds." It is thus in beautiful connection with living forms as we see them around us, even as God has brought for us life out of death, and wrought in the transformation of our ruined humanity that which is the brightest display of divine glory. Christ is Man, the highest possible type of manhood; and while in Him the thought of evil is absolutely excluded, yet is He "the Seed of the woman;" and God has in this done what was possible to Him alone, and brought "a clean thing out of an unclean." But more than this, for here is one who has emptied Himself of that which was properly His, "the form of God," to assume the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of men. He too has been in the darkness of death, and come up out of it to be thus the glorious Light of redeemed men forever—the display also of God, in the love which brought Him down, and which has pre-

² (4);
Thrones in
subject
association
with the
Throne.

² And ^oround the throne were four and twenty
thrones; and upon the thrones, four and twenty
^oelders sitting, clothed in ^owhite garments, and upon
their heads golden ^ocrowns.

o cf. ch. 3.21.
cf. Rom. 8.
17.
p cf. 1 Chro.
24. 1-19.
cf. Heb. 12.
23.

q cf. ch. 3.4, 5; *cf.* ch. 19.8, 14. *r* cf. ch. 2.10; *cf.* 2 Tim. 4.8.

pared for Him also a body, the sign of that perpetual service to us which He has taken up. Of the depths to which He has descended the sardine stone reminds us by its ruddy hue; and thus, in the combination of the jasper, or diamond, and the sardine stone, we have, indeed, God manifest as nowhere else we could find Him: for if this seem for a moment to be Christ rather than God, or, let us say, the Father, yet, as we know, it is not Christ's own love simply that has been displayed to us, but the Father's love who sent Him, "Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." This, one might even say, the jasper and the sardine stone must needs be intended to convey to us; for what other manifestation have we of God than that which we have seen in Christ? He is "the Image of the invisible God," who is at the same time "the First-born of all creation," the One in whom appears the true creation of God, never more to be marred by sin or failure, but abiding in Him who is the centre and glory of it, who is "all and in all."

Here, then, is the "appearance" of the One who sits upon the throne; and suitably the next thing that we read is that about this throne there was "a rainbow, in appearance like unto an emerald." Here, again, we are reminded of the ruin of humanity—reminded, in fact, of the Flood, after which God used the bow as a token that it should recur upon the earth no more—this by His grace alone; and here the bow is but the glory of the light displayed in that which was the storm of judgment, but which is now destined but to refresh and fertilize the earth. It is a promise for the earth that we rightly read in it. Judgment is about to be poured out, but it is a judgment, not to destroy the earth, but to destroy those that would destroy it—a judgment to salvation; and here the character of what is coming before us is shown at once. Israel on the earth is necessarily connected with it, for with blessing for the earth, as we have already seen, the blessing of Israel is an ordained necessity. This is what all the power of the throne is set in motion to accomplish now.

² But it is not the one throne that is before us simply. There are thrones around the throne; and here at once we come again to what is of central importance for the understanding of what follows. In the common version we find, perhaps, an illustration of the strange way in which even Christians hesitate fully to believe the grace of God. The translators have put "seats," although there is no possible doubt as to the meaning of the word; and there is a similar illustration, as one may surely think, in the view of many, that those who fill these thrones are angels rather than saints. Yet everything here decisively declares that they are saints, and saints alone, who are intended. The very word "elders" naturally implies this. The elders in Israel were the representatives as well as the judges of the people, representing God indeed in that judgment which they exercised for Him, so that, as we know, and as the Lord argued with the Jews, they were even called "gods," as those to whom the word, that is, the commission, of God had come. As His representatives, they are identified with Him. Here, of course, everything is in a higher sphere, but we see upon these elders the white garments which are afterwards interpreted to us as the "righteousnesses of the saints;" and while their golden crowns proclaim them kings, their number seems designed to speak of the priestly courses, which were twenty-four in Israel, as their priestly connection afterwards confirms; and it is in their song of praise that we hear the explanatory words as to the redeemed, "Thou hast made them to our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth" (chap. v. 10).

Thus there is no room for doubt as to who are represented by the crowned elders here; and these thrones and crowns certify to us also another thing—that

these are saints, not only *redeemed*, but *glorified*. They are not spirits simply in happiness, as "absent from the body and present with the Lord," but they are saints risen and glorified; for these crowns speak of their reward having come, as it comes for us all together; not singly and individually, as the Lord calls away His own by death, but all together; as the apostle wishes for the Corinthians that they *did* reign, that the apostles themselves therefore might reign also.

It is less certain as to what their number indicates, which, one would say, should be certainly symbolic. As 24 it would most naturally seem to yield two twelves, the number of manifest rule, which we see in the 12 apostles, and in the 12 tribes of earth's royal people. The two twelves, therefore, may speak to us of a double company, of the saints of the Old Testament times and of the New, reigning together now in a common kingdom, while at the same time they are distinct as companies, "the Church of the first-born ones, whose names are written in heaven," as the apostle gives them (Heb. xii. 23), and the "spirits of just men made perfect:" not merely spirits now, for they could not be perfected apart from resurrection, but such as had as a company passed through death, as with the Church, as a whole, it will not be. Here are certainly two companies shown us who reign here together, although the distinction between them is not noticed here. It is not in the line of truth with which we are to be occupied.

Daniel has already shown us these thrones set, when the Son of man comes to take the kingdom (chap. vii. 9). Our common version has "cast down," but it is allowed that "set" is the proper rendering. But Daniel sees no occupants for these thrones. That remains as a secret hereafter to be revealed. We are in the complete and final prophecy here, which gathers up all these intimations, and makes plain to us their full significance. Here, it is now quite manifest what has taken place. The trumpet-voice which called the seer up to heaven was indeed representative of that which will soon gather all the saints. He who said to Philadelphia, "Behold, I come quickly," has in fact now come; not yet manifesting Himself in the clouds of heaven so that every eye should see Him, but to His own simply, who, by grace, have been waiting for Him. It is strange how persistently still the mass of commentators refuse to acknowledge this, and see in these crowned elders but an anticipation of what was in the far-off distance yet—a vision, for instance, such as we find in the company gathered out of every nation and with their palms before the throne, which is plainly anticipative. Now these two visions are in fact identified, although it is distinctly said of the latter one that it is of those who come out of the great tribulation, as the mass of the saints here most certainly do not, while it is one of these very elders who explains to the seer as to the company at whom he is looking. And this in itself lets us know that the vision of the elders is not in that way anticipative: for the presence of the elders is seen through the after-prophecy: they worship when the seventh trumpet sounds; the new song, which the 144,000 alone can learn, is sung in their presence; and when great Babylon is judged, they fall down once more before the throne, saying, "Amen, hal-leluiah."

Thus they are an abiding reality all through this long reach of prophecy; and we must accept the view of glorified saints, risen therefore with Christ and reigning, all through the time of which the prophecy speaks. Even this is only one of the intimations, however important an one, of what is here before us. Christianity upon earth is at an end, and we are in what the Lord calls, in the prophecy upon the mount of Olives, "the end of the age;" that is, as we have seen there, the end of the Jewish age, (Christian age there is really none)—the broken-off last week of those seventy determined upon the city and people of Israel, at the end of which their full blessing is to come. The tokens of this are all around us at every step as we proceed, and it is only an utter confusion between the Jew and the Christian, between the earthly and the heavenly, between suffering and reigning, between "the kingdom and patience" of Christ

³ (5): Manifestations of the Throne.

⁴ (6-11): The four living creatures and the universal praise.

³ And out of the throne proceeded ^alightnings and voices and thunders; and [there were] seven ^alamps of fire, burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

⁴ And before the throne [there was] as a "sea of glass like crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, four ^aliving beings, full of ^aeyes, before and behind: and the first living being was like a ^alion, and

6, 7. *w cf. Ezek. 1. 18; cf. Zech. 4. 10; cf. Prov. 15. 3. x Ezek. 1. 10; cf. Prov. 30. 29, 30; cf. ch. 5. 5.*

^a Ps. 97. 3, 4.
ch. 8. 5.
^t cf. Ex. 37. 23.
^{cf.} Zech. 4. 2.
^u ch. 15. 2.
^{ctr.} 1 Ki. 7. 23-26.
^{cf.} ch. 21. 27.
^w cf. Gen. 3. 24.
^{cf.} Ex. 37. 24.

and His kingdom and glory, that can cause any possible mistake as to what is so abundantly manifest.

³ We are turned back now to look at the supreme throne itself, and we see proceeding from it lightnings and voices and thunders. The character is manifestly one of judgment, but we have been permitted to see, first, the bow of promise over it. The voices give character to what is here: the lightnings and thunders are interpreted by them. They are no longer simply providences, which we may be wholly unable to interpret. Their purpose is becoming more and more manifest. Then there are "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." They are the different operations of the Spirit in that perfection which must necessarily attach to these. They carry us back in thought to the sanctuary-lamps, but which are connected with the central stem, which speaks of Christ Himself maintaining the divine light for men, as we see Him, though in other connection, in the eleventh of Isaiah (ver. 2), where we have exactly the candlestick: three pairs of branches, and the central stem, "the Spirit of Jehovah," Israel's covenant-God, being the lamp upon this; while "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord," give us evidently the three pairs of branches. These all rest upon the One who comes forward to take the kingdom, "with righteousness" to "judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." It is added, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked one." It is evident how near we approach in that to what we find here. The seven spirits are before the throne. They act in connection with divine government, giving effect to the counsels of God concerning Christ, and for the bringing in of blessing upon the earth. These operations of the Spirit are as "lamps of fire" illuminating the scene, which otherwise, if we think of the earth, is in darkness; and it is the earth, of course, that is contemplated here, although the lamps burn before the throne in heaven. Thus we see clearly the character of what is before us.

⁴ But there is yet more to be seen. Before the throne there is a sea of glass like crystal. This is evidently intended to remind us of the brazen sea in the earthly temple, but which was for purification. Here purification is accomplished. It is not a sea of water any more, but filled with that which is the image of perfect purity. In the after-vision, those that have gotten the victory over the beast and over his image stand upon the sea of glass, having the harps of God. Purification for them plainly is accomplished: they stand in triumph upon the sea. But they are not upon it yet, as we contemplate it here. Their purification upon earth has yet to be accomplished. At present the significance is necessarily for those who have reached it, the heavenly saints themselves, for whom the world-trial is over and sanctification perfected.

And now, in the midst of the throne, and around it, are seen "four living beings full of eyes before and behind." The translation "beasts," as in the common version, is plainly wrong and misleading, the human element here being degraded to the bestial, for the third living being has the face of a man. The word, although applied constantly to animals, simply means (as the word animal itself does) "a living being." In these we find the four divisions of nature

the second living being like an ^oox, and the third living being had the face as of a ^man, and the fourth living being was like a flying ^eeagle. And the four living beings, having each one of them ^ssix wings, are full of eyes around and within: and they cease not day and night saying, ^HHoly, holy, holy, Lord God ^AAlmighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.

y cf. Lev. 1. 3, 5.
e cf. Prov. 14. 4.
e cf. Lk. 22. 27.
z cf. 1 Tim. 2. 5.
e cf. Heb. 4. 15.
a cf. Jno. 3. 12, 13.

cf. Hab. 1. 8. *b* Is. 6. 2. *c* Is. 6. 3. *d* ch. 1. 8.

as Scripture presents them: the wild beast in the lion; cattle in the ox; one with the face of a man, the form not being given; and the last, the flying eagle, the prince of the birds of the heaven. We necessarily connect them with the similar figures in Ezekiel, connected also with the throne of God, and which are cherubic: remembering the cherubim also upon the veil, the figure of Christ's humanity, we should have no difficulty in seeing their typical resemblance to what is presented of Christ in the four Gospels. This has been already before us in looking at the Gospels themselves. Christ is He into whose hands divine government is entrusted, and therefore the connection of these symbols of it with the veil. But the cherubim speak of divine government, no doubt, as identified with the instruments used of God, in whose hand all things are, and who works out His purposes by means of whatever instrumentality He pleases. In Ezekiel we find, accompanying the cherubim, wheels within wheels—the wheels of the chariot of deity, which present, after the manner of Ecclesiastes, the course of things continually revolving; the history, as men say, that repeats itself with the generations of men, yet never returns to just what it was before, the course being ever onward. This is because it is God who is controlling it, and there is in it divine meaning and purpose, even while necessarily the creature is put into his place as such; man, if you look at him in himself, but vanity, and yet God working throughout that which is *not* vain, and of which eternity will proclaim the wisdom.

But the wheels are not seen in Revelation: we have simply the cherubic beings, the coursers of the chariot. And here, as we look at them, we see evidently that they show us the character of this government which God is exercising; the order itself being also significant, and indeed that which, as connected with Christ, we find in the Gospels. For the first being, like a lion, represents, as is plain, that power which is the first requisite to any government at all, the "lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away for any" (Prov. xxx. 30). But this needs guarding against thoughts which might attach to it, for the lion is a beast of prey pure and simple, and his rush and spring are little characteristic in general of the government of God, although there are crises, as we know, which may be better represented by it. But here, the second living being, the patient ox, comes in, in which strength is imaged also, but strength devoted to service and working in the interests of man; and thus the rule of God is service also, and in man's fullest interests, as we are sure. The hands that hold it now are human also, and the hands of the perfect Servant who has served us well, and whose humanity is the pledge that He will serve us ever. The third living being has therefore the face as of a man. The face is that in which you read both intelligence and heart, and God has in Christ come near us after this manner. A man's face may, after all, hide the secrets of his heart; but here is One with whom there is no hiding, who seeks to be known by men, and to make God known; God being indeed manifest in flesh as nowhere else, come to be so near to us, so tender in condescending grace. Yet here also the fourth living being adds what we must not, and cannot, forget—the inscrutability oftentimes of perfect wisdom; ways that in one sense are open to us, and yet everywhere beyond us: this is the thought of the flying eagle. "The way of an eagle in the air" is one of the four things which the wise man declares "too wonderful" for him (Prov. xxx. 18, 19). The eagle naturally reminds us of judgment also, and that "whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered togeth-

And when the living beings shall give glory and honor and thanksgiving to him that sitteth upon the throne, who liveth unto the ages of ages, the twenty-four elders shall *fall down before him that sitteth upon the throne, and worship him that liveth unto the ages of ages; and shall †cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art ‡worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast †created all things, and for †thy will they were, and were created.

e ch. 5. 8. 14.
f cf. Ps. 115. 1.
cf. Acts 3.
12, 13.
cf. 1 Cor. 15.
10.
g cf. ch. 5. 12.
h Gen. 1. 1.
cf. Jno. 1. 3.
† cf. Col. 1. 16.
cf. Ps. 19. 1.

er:" a scripture which applies to the very time before us, when the instruments of God's judgment will cleanse the earth from all its defilement, and by the very ban upon evil consecrate it to God. But the eagle is associated by God Himself with much more tender thoughts. "I bare you on eagles' wings," says the Lord to Israel (Ex. xix. 4), "and brought you to Myself;" and again (Deut. xxxii. 11), "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him." The flying eagle naturally connects with such passages as these, and there is no contradiction in any of them; God's judgments also being under the control of and working out the purposes of His love—love to which judgment is at the same time a necessary and yet a "strange act."

Here then, plainly, are characteristics of divine government,* while the whole make us think, of necessity, of how God uses the creatures He has made, aye the dumb creatures, and much more those who were created in the image of Himself, to accomplish His purposes. These living beings have each one of them six wings, the number of full and, indeed, unresting activity, while they are "full of eyes around and within." Divine omniscience is in them, although this does not mean that the instruments themselves possess it, though as instruments they manifest it. Thus the instincts of the animal creation generally manifest a wisdom higher than what is really in them, and so will all God's instruments which work out His purposes, guided (as we see in inspiration) better than they know. And as they rest not, so they cease not day and night saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come." The day and night are evidently from the earthly standpoint, for in heaven there is no night; but we have to do with the government which is over the earth, where day and night exist, but where the night as well as the day, the darkness as well as the light, speak in the ears of those that hear, of the holiness of an almighty God, the perfect Master of all, and the Unchangeable. Well then may it be that when these living beings give "glory and honor and thanksgiving to Him that sitteth upon the throne," the living God throughout eternal ages, the redeemed fall down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and worship, and cast their crowns before the throne,—crowns that they have received from Him,—saying, "Thou art worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and were created." What a rest for the heart as we go on to consider events, often so terrible in themselves, which are now to follow! The absolute sovereignty of God from which, alas, men so often shrink, is nevertheless what is the salvation of all. There is nowhere any mere *drift*. He who has given Christ for men is making all things work together for good in the accomplishment of His perfect will.†

* As has been frequently noticed, these living creatures correspond in significance closely to the four Gospels, which set forth Christ. All judgment is committed to Him, and each Gospel presents Him in a character suited to the features of one of these living creatures. Thus in Matthew, the Gospel of the Kingdom, we see Him as the Lion of the tribe of Judah; in Mark, the Gospel of the perfect Servant, we see Him as the patient ox serving God's will and man's need; in Luke, we see the face of a Man, for it is the Gospel of the Son of man; and in John, the heavenly Gospel, we see the soaring eagle.—S. R.

† It is also of the greatest importance to see that creation exists for God's glory, and not primarily for the creature's happiness. Where this latter is considered as its end, men spend

2 (v.): The Redeemer the opener of the seven-sealed book.

1 (1-5): The Lion, the Root of David.

2. ¹ And I saw on the right hand of him that sat upon the throne a book written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ² Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And ³ no one was able, either in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, to open the book, or to look thereon. And I

j cf. Ezek. 2. 9.
cf. Dan. 12. 4.
k cf. Ps. 15. 1 with Rom. 8. 10-12.
l cf. Is. 63. 5.

2. The ground of praise, as we see in the worship of the elders, has been hitherto creation. "Thou hast created all things" is the word; but we have now what is clearly different from this. A book, hitherto unnoticed, is seen in the right hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne, "a book written within and on the back, and sealed with seven seals." This book only One is found worthy to open; and when we look at Him, He is plainly revealed as the Lamb of sacrifice—the Redeemer therefore of His people. It is the Redeemer who alone can be the opener of the seven-sealed book. But what is intended by this? It is natural for us to think, especially in connection with the character of Revelation as a whole, that we have here the book of God's counsels, which, opened, shows us what is now coming, and to what the present action of the throne is directed. It is taken by some, however, as being rather the Lamb's title-deeds to the inheritance, and we are referred to the fact that such a sealed book was put into the hands of the redeemer of an inheritance, with the names of the witnesses written upon the back. It is said that any other thought is unworthy of what we find here—the tears of John when for the moment no one is found worthy to open the book; while it is plain that Christ was at all times the Revealer, and John could surely not be ignorant of this.

Redemption is of course, and rightly, considered to be the actual bringing out of the inheritance from under the power of the enemy, and from all the state of alienation into which it has got; and thus it is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who prevails to open the book. Power is now about to accomplish what divine grace has laid the foundation for. We are told also that when the Lamb takes the book, the song that is sung in heaven is not the song of praise for revelation, but for redemption, and that the redemption goes forward with the breaking of the seals step by step. This view of redemption is certainly according to Scripture, and that it is redemption which is in progress here; but it does not follow any the more that the book speaks of the title-deeds to the inheritance, and it seems late indeed in the history to have such title-deeds brought forward now. Moreover, that John should not know to whom these title-deeds belong is as incredible as anything. Such books moreover, in which the writing overflowed upon the back, were not unknown, outside of such title-deeds as are referred to. No doubt what opens this is not mere words, but deeds, which alone will make everything plain, clear up all the difficulties of unfulfilled prophecy, and show us the complete thoughts of God as they have never been seen before. In fact, when the seals are opened there is no proving of title or declaration of it: but the redemption itself proceeds by orderly steps to its completion. Not till the seals are all broken is the book fully opened, and this is of importance as to what is contained under the seals themselves, which are clearly thus introductory, rather than giving the details of redemption.

¹ But we have to notice first, what is emphasized by the structure, that it is "the Lion of the the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," who prevails to open the book. It is astonishing how little such a title as this seems to have impressed the mass of the interpreters of Revelation; but the lack of discernment as to Israel's place in prophecy, and that, as the apostle has said, to Israel belong

their lives in the vain pursuit of that which can only be had in full subjection to God. How the restless ways of men would be stilled, how selfishness would cease, were men to seek God's will and glory! Need we add, in the words of our Lord, that "all these things"—happiness, peace, prosperity—would be "added unto" us?—S. R.

^m wept much because no one was found worthy to open the book, nor to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the ⁿ Lion which is of the tribe of Judah, the ^o Root of David, hath ^p prevailed, to open the book and the seven seals thereof.

² And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living beings, and in the midst of the elders, a ^q Lamb standing, as if it had been ^r slain, having seven ^s horns and seven ^t eyes, which are the seven spirits of God

with Is. 63. 1-3. *q* Jno. 1. 29. ch. 22. 3. *r* ver. 9. *s* cf. Matt. 28. 18. *t* cf. Zech. 3. 8, 9; *q* Jno. 2. 25.

m cf. Is. 51. 17-20.

cf. Lam. 1. 2.

n cf. Gen. 49.

9.

cf. Prov. 19.

12.

cf. Amos 3.

8.

o Is. 11. 1, 10.

ch. 22. 16.

cf. Matt. 1. 1.

p cf. ch. 3. 21.

cf. Is. 53. 12.

² (6-7): The Lamb slain.

the Old Testament promises, has resulted in a generalization of such things in a way that has blurred all distinctness of vision. Judah's Lion has thus been separated from Judah. It speaks of power which is in the Lord's hand to execute the purpose of redemption, no doubt; but the Church is looked at as the inheritor of all such promises, and prophecy has been made, as we have often said, so much a matter of private interpretation, each one taken so apart from the whole mind of the Spirit as revealed in those who spake by Him, that of necessity any application may be accepted which may seem competent to be the fulfilment of what is in it. On the other hand, when we remember that we are at the end of the addresses to the Church—that the whole place of vision has been now removed from earth to heaven,—and that there the saints are upon their thrones around the throne of God,—that the rainbow also around the throne is prophesying of a salvation by judgment of the earth itself,—how plainly significant it is that we should find here just “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” coming to the front, and power put into His hand!

Israel and the earth are in the closest possible connection with one another. No blessing for the earth can be until Israel is blest, and thus the conqueror-King of Israel as seen here is every way significant. It is true that we do not stop with this. We are reminded of David and of the promises to him; but here is not merely David's Son and Heir, but “the Root of David,” which speaks of the One who, while truly David's Son, is no less David's Lord. He is the Root from whom David and the promises to him alike spring; and how competent are the elders now to point to the One who has taken the set time, and comes forward to fulfil purposes wider than those revealed in the present gospel, which, however presented to men as a whole, the earth at large will never receive. As we find in the second psalm, against the One whom God has declared His Son, against Jehovah and His anointed, alike, “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together;” and this spirit of rebellion, vain as it is, will not be ended until the Shepherd of Israel comes forth with His iron rod. Then, when the heathen are given Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, He shall tend them (as the word is) with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. How different from that overspreading of the earth with the gospel to which men, after all these centuries of delay, are still looking forward! After all, it is the only way in which the blessing *can* come, and the present time of grace and forbearance is just that which perfectly demonstrates this. Till then, spite of the gospel of peace, peace there is not; and the only word possible on God's part is that through the prophet: “I will overturn, overturn, overturn, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it Him.” Christ must come to put down all rule and all authority and power, and all enemies shall then be put under His feet. The time at which we have arrived here is as evident therefore as can be. Here, however, the hands that rule are human hands: yet they are capable of acting in far more than human power. In Him at last judgment shall return to righteousness; and the rod of power which, out of His hands, has assumed the serpent form, now that He puts forth His hand to grasp it, is to return obediently to Him.

² The seer turns to behold the Lion of Judah, and He beholds, in fact, a

[that are] sent into all the earth; and he came and "took it out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

u cf. Jno. 5. 22, 23, 27.

3 (8-10):
The wor-
ship of the
saints.

³ And when he took the book, the four living beings and the four and twenty elders "fell before the Lamb, having each one a "harp and golden bowls full of "incense,* which are the prayers of the saints. And they

v ch. 4. 8, 10.
ch. 19. 4.
w cf. ch. 14. 2.
Ps. 150. 3.
x cf. Ps. 141.
2.
cf. Song. 1.
3.

* The word is in the plural.

Lamb; nor merely a Lamb, but One that has been slain—One who has been dead, yet lives, and is in the midst of the divine throne, and of the four living beings and of the elders, the Centre of all. The word for Lamb is significant. It is not the ordinary one, but a diminutive; instead of *amnos*, it is *arnion*—One who has been belittled and rejected by man, although here with all power as His. Here is His title to be the Redeemer, that He is the Lamb, the slain Lamb, but the slain Lamb risen; His work therefore accepted of God, and the seal upon man's fallen condition broken at last and forever; death yielding to resurrection. He has therefore the seven horns, which speak of complete power, and the "seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth," perfect in omniscience and executive ability. The whole earth is before Him as come into it in humiliation; He has learnt, as man, the whole condition of things; and as man, therefore, and the Son of man, judgment is committed to Him. In this character it is that He takes the book out of the right hand of Him that sits upon the throne. He is the Son-servant of that throne. He is the One who, having done the will of God Himself alone, in the infinite depths of darkness, comes forth still to do the will of His Father upon the throne; and thus all things are put into His hand to give the universe its final adjustment, never to be disturbed again. He is the "Father of Eternity," the King of kings and Lord of lords.

³ When He takes the book, the four living beings and the throned elders fall before the Lamb and worship. They are united together here, and in a song in which no angel joins or can join. It is most significant, the union of these in this praise in which inanimate creation itself, as betokened in the harp, yet can unite, touched by the hand of him who was placed originally as lord over the earth, but who has hitherto brought how much else beside music out of it! Now he has at last come back to the original purpose of God with regard to him, and with songs sweeter and more wonderful than creation itself could furnish. The angels, as already said, have no place here. Although it be most contrary to the thoughts entertained of them, we never hear of the angels *singing*. They have not in their song the deep notes necessary for this; nor can they (still more strange as it may seem to us) rise up to the high ones which grace is teaching us. They "behold in the Church the manifold wisdom of God," and "see the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." The angels we find in a circle outside the singers here, and therefore necessarily apart from them.

The four living beings are plainly, as we see now, not angels, but men; that is to say, the government of God of which they speak is now according to that which Scripture fully declares shall be in the hands of men: "To the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak;" but it is man—made, indeed, a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death—who is in this way crowned with honor and glory, and set over the works of God's hand. Christ is in the midst of the throne. He reigns, and reigns as man; but thus also His people reign with Him. The cherubic figures are no class distinctly; they are not *necessarily* angels or men. They speak of administration, of government which may be in the hands of either: it has been in the hands of angels, as we see most plainly in the book of Daniel, while now in the world to come it is in the hands of men; and thus we have in the song that is sung

⁴ (11-14):
The echo
of creation.

sing a ⁷new song, saying, ^{*}Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast ^aslain, and hast ^bpurchased to God by thy blood [men] of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made them to our God ^ckings^{*} and priests, and they shall ^dreign over the earth.

⁴ And I saw, and I heard the voice of many ^eangels round the throne and the living beings and the elders, and their ^fnumber was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,

^{*} Many read, "a kingdom."

y cf. ch. 4.11.
cf. ch. 14.3.
z ver. 12.
a cf. Acts 3.
15.
b 1 Pet. 1.18,
19.
1 Cor. 6.20.
c ch. 1. 5, 6.
d cf. 2 Tim.
2. 12.
e cf. 1 Pet. 1.
12.
cf. Eph. 3.10.
cf. Ps. 103.
20.
f cf. Ps. 68.17.
cf. Heb. 12.
22.

now, "Thou hast made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth." The editors have decided that it is not "*we* shall reign," as in our common version, but "*they*." But that does not mean that these are speaking of others than themselves. They are not speaking of *all* redeemed men, for it is not of all redeemed men that it could be said, "They shall reign over the earth;" nor could it be said of all, "Thou hast made them kings and priests to God." In the elders, on the other hand, we see clearly such. They are all enthroned; and now we find them with the golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints; but in this case they speak generally: "Thou hast purchased to God by Thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, . . . and they shall reign."

Thus the time at which we have arrived should be perfectly clear. These are heavenly saints, seen as about to enter on their reign over the earth; and in their character as priests it is that they have the golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. It is not said that they are offering them. In fact, at this moment they are in another attitude; but this seems to be given as a mark of the period which is now beginning, and of the company before us. Observe, however, that they are never looked at as themselves interceding, nor do they *add* anything to the prayers with which they are charged. They have no supererogatory merits to give efficacy to what they present, and the prayers themselves are the incense; not incense is added to them, although it may well be (perhaps we should say *must* be) that the incense is the sweet savor of Christ discerned in these which are the fruit of His work; but it is plain that these priestly ones cannot add this to them.

The song that they are singing is a *new* song; not because Christ is to them a new person, or that they have made new discoveries as to Him, or as to His work, but redemption is now at last for them accomplished, and it is this they celebrate, or rather the person who has accomplished it. Worthy is He to take the book of God's counsels, and open it fully out, the execution of them all being absolutely in His hands. And if He is assuming a character as the Lion of Judah in which they are not so immediately in personal relation to Him, their joy in Him will lack nothing on that account. They are those of whom He said upon earth, "I have not called you servants, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15).

⁴ The praise of the redeemed is echoed now by the praise of all creation. Not only is there sympathy with the blessing of others, but this redemption has much to do with the blessing of those who are, in a sense, altogether outside it. We know that the angels are deeply interested spectators of what is now going on. They are learning, not merely of that grace to others which redemption shows, but they are learning for themselves, in this way, the depths of the heart of God as otherwise they could not know them. Yet the power of the redemption is seen in the place of the redeemed. The angels are not only around the throne, but around the living beings and the elders, thus in a distinct circle:

^gWorthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive ^hpower, and ⁱriches, and ^jwisdom, and ^kstrength, and ^lhonor, and ^mglory, and ⁿblessing. And ^oevery creature which is in the heaven and upon earth and under the earth and upon the sea, even all things in them, heard I saying, To him that ^psitteth upon the throne, and unto the ^qLamb be blessing, and honor, and glory, and might, unto the ages of ages. And the four ^rliving beings said, Amen; and the ^selders fell down and worshipped.

g ver. 9.
cf. Phil. 2.
9-11.
h *ctr.* 2 Cor.
13. 4.
i *ctr.* 2 Cor.
8. 9.
j *ctr.* Jno. 8.
48.
k *ctr.* Ps. 102.
23.
l *ctr.* Jno. 8.
49.
m *ctr.* Is. 52.
14.
n *ctr.* Lk. 23.

35: *ctr.* Gal. 3. 13. *o* Phil. 2. 10; Rom. 14. 11; Ps. 148. 1-13. *p* ch. 4. 2, 3. ch. 6. 16. *q* *cf.* John 5. 23. *r* ch. 4. 8. *s* ch. 19. 4.

naturally an astonishing thing for us who know that by creation they are nearer to God than we—"angels that excel in strength, that obey His commandments, harkening to the voice of His word;" and moreover, beings who have never fallen, never lost the place, therefore, which they had by creation. How is it possible, we might ask, that sinners, though delivered from their sins and brought to God in righteousness, can have a nearer place than these unfallen beings? Such a view has been denounced, moreover, by Christians themselves, as the mere haughtiness of human imagination. But on the other hand, what is forgotten by those who take this ground is that which gives the only right point of view. This nearness and exaltation for the redeemed is a testimony not to them, but to the Redeemer. It is the value of His work which they thus enjoy, as it is here the worthiness of the Lamb slain that the angels proclaim: "Worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." And this Lamb, who is He but the One who has Himself been pleased to come down into the creature-place, Himself to take up manhood, not because it was near enough to Him, so that there would be little distance traversed to take it up, but the very contrary. He has reached out, and is reaching out, to that which was in the lowest place and farthest distance, and in that way has acquired a glory to Himself also which is just the glory of this unspeakable grace. The lower His love has descended, the more it has displayed the innermost nature, the heart of God; and in this display all nature is now therefore glowing with the light of it. Thus the song of the redeemed which the angels cannot sing, the harp in their hands, the response of inanimate nature itself as touched by their hand—all this proclaims now the glory of Christ, the glory of Him *for* whom as well as *by* whom all things were created.

Therefore the response of creation in its widest extent follows now: "And every creature which is in the heaven, and upon the earth, and under the earth, and upon the sea, and all things in them, heard I saying, To Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, be blessing, and honor, and glory, and might, unto the ages of ages." It is evident that the praise here is not simply human; it is like the praise-bursts of the Psalms: "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity" (Ps. cxviii. 7-9). That is now to be attained for which "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth. . . . Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. viii. 19-22). More and more, therefore, is it confirmed—if any confirmation were needed—that it is the time of the glory of the children of God, of their manifestation in their own proper character, that is now come. The government of God, as represented by the four living beings, confirms it with their Amen; and the elders, prostrate in the homage of their hearts, fall down and worship.

SECTION 2. (Chaps. vi.-viii. 4.)

The seals removed in the judgments coming in.

1 (vi. 1-8):
The
grounds of
the judgments,
in the call of
the cheru-
bin.

1 (1, 2): The
first seal
removed:
the call of the lion.

1. ¹ AND I saw when the Lamb opened 'one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four "living beings saying, as a voice of thunder, "Come.* And I saw, and be-

* Many MSS. have here, and in the parallel places, the addition, "and see;" but compare notes below.

7 vers. 3, 5,
etc.
u ch. 4. 7.
ch. 5. 6.
v cf. 2Thess.
2. 9-12.
cf. John 19.
15.

Sec. 2.

We are now called to see the actual breaking of the seals, so that the book may be opened. It is the Lamb who removes them, as we know; but the sign of their being removed is in the judgment sent forth which answers to it, and by which the blessing alone can be brought in. With these the mystery of God's patience is removed. His government becomes what we may call *ideal*, in regard to the strife between good and evil going on still upon the earth. The long-suffering of God indeed has been salvation; but now, though in a different sense, His *judgments* are to be for salvation. As in the times of the judges in Israel, spite of divine interventions occurring when the state of things began to be insufferable, yet the call is heard more and more for a king, as the only proper remedy. "There was no king in Israel," says the inspired historian, "every one did that which was right in his own eyes." If the doing of what was *right* in this way worked disaster, what then as to the constant evil rising up, and that more and more? The king must come. Yet when he came in Israel, he was the mere foreshadow of the true King. Therefore the distress went on still, relieved, but not removed—and soon again with hardly a relief of it. He had not come who was fit to bear rule; and until He comes there is the constant need of patience. He reigns upon the throne of God, while yet it is still the "kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." But now the King is coming forth; the time of patience is just over. God is going to manifest Himself. Judgment is returning to righteousness. The seals upon the book which prevent man's reading it are being removed.

1. As each seal is broken, a new action upon earth follows. The seals are seven, and that number is noticeable. The prevalence of these numbers characterizes Revelation, as we have seen. They speak everywhere of the undisturbed harmony of God's ways. Spite of the conflict, this harmony of course must always be; and this is what all through Scripture God means us to discern; but the harmony is becoming open now, and our attention is called to it; and thus we have the number of the seals, and of the trumpets, and of the vials; their order distinctly shown us—the way in which the divine steps move on unhindered to the sure end. Here too, as elsewhere, we find that the seven divides into four and three, the number of the creature and the number of divine manifestation. The first four have therefore a more external character than the last three. They do not reach in the same way (at least not in the same open way) to the heart of things. With this it accords that when the first four seals are opened we have in each case the call of one of the living beings, and in the order in which we have had them brought before us already—the lion, the ox, the human-faced cherub, and the flying eagle.

These calls are very significant; and their significance has hardly been observed by any interpreters. We have seen that these cherubim as they were embroidered on the veil of the tabernacle (which was, as the apostle has taught us, Christ's flesh, or humanity), so they are seen in the Gospels again in the same order in which we have them here—the Lion of Judah in Matthew's Gospel; the ox in that of Mark—the Gospel of ministry; the face of the man most evidently in Luke, which is above all the Gospel of Christ's humanity; while the flying eagle, the bird of heaven, speaks naturally of Him who has come from heaven to us, of the Word made flesh. But if this be so, we should expect that

hold, a "white horse, and he that sat upon it had a "bow; and there was given unto him a "crown, and he went forth "conquering and to conquer.

w Zech. 6.3.
ctr. ch. 19.
11.
x cf. Is. 66.19.
y cf. Dan. 9.

27 with ch. 13. 1, etc. *z cf.* Dan. 7. 7, 8.

now when the Lamb has taken the book, these cherubim should each represent Him in one of these characters; and it is not in opposition to this that the call should be a call for judgment: for if it be the Lamb slain that is before us, this, while it speaks to us necessarily of the grace of redemption, yet has in it also another side. The death of Christ, on God's side, for us speaks of grace; but on man's side it speaks of the rejection by the world of Him who had come into it. Thus the cross is the stamp upon the world, and by which the world is crucified to us and we to it. The Lamb moreover, as *arnion*, (which speaks of belittling, of diminution,) naturally connects with this. The cross was man's measure of Christ. Unto the Jew it was an offense, and to the Greek foolishness; while to those who are the called, whether Jews or Greeks, it is "the wisdom of God and the power of God." But Christ rejected by the world, what does it mean but the judgment of the world?—a judgment also which works out (in a certain sense and within limits) often naturally.

Christ rejected means antichrist accepted. But Christ rejected also means, of necessity, the rejection of the blessing that comes alone through Him; and thus the government of God, as signified in the cherubim, makes necessary answer. If Christ be rejected as the King, men must have their own king; and while for the present man's king himself may be owned of God and is used of Him in the restraint of evil, while His long-suffering lasts, yet this is but—as to His government—a seal as it were, a mystery for the meantime, which, when the time of its removal comes, ends in the full character of man's rejection coming out. Even the rule of Christ becomes now the rod of iron; and the rule of man, in the end, worse even than the anarchy which it was meant to restrain. How significant, then, the call of the cherubim at this juncture!

¹ As to the first seal, indeed, there is a certain obscurity as to which of the living beings speaks under it. That it is the voice of the cherub that speaks confirms that alteration from the text of our common version which the manuscripts indeed permit, but which we cannot say exactly that they establish by any decisive weight of authority; but the confirmation from all the context here is absolute. The call of divine government is not to John, but to what comes forth in answer to it. Thus the call is not, "Come and see," but simply, "Come." The voice of thunder speaks plainly here. The seer would hardly be summoned after this manner, and moreover again and again as the successive seals are broken. It is the government of God that calls forth the instrument of judgment; and this shows again the character of what is called forth. We should not think, for instance, of Christ as the rider of the white horse if we had things in their proper place here. Doubtless He *will* come forth, and, according to the figure in the nineteenth chapter, upon a white horse too. This is the symbol of victorious warfare, the horse being the war-horse; and his going forth crowned, conquering and to conquer, seems clearly to harmonize with, nay, to be most fully true of Him who will put all enemies under His feet. But it is not suited that *He* should be thus called forth; nor is the time yet for Him to come after this manner. We cannot put at the beginning that which comes in fact at the end. As to gospel-triumphs, it is really impossible to speak of them in such a connection.

As already said, there is a slight obscurity as to which of the living beings calls forth the conqueror here; but, plainly, we must recognize that the lion is the most suitable one; and moreover, as in the second seal we have the voice of the second living being; in the third, that of the third; and so with the following one, the lion is thus every way implied, if not expressed, as speaking in the first. No doubt there is suitability even in the measure of obscurity, and we

² (3.4): The second seal removed; the call of the ox.

² And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living being saying, "Come. And another, a red horse, went forth; and to him that sat upon it, it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

a cf. Is. 8.6, 7.
b Zech. 6. 2.
c Nah. 2. 3.
cf. 2 Ki. 3.
22, 23.
c cf. Ju. 7. 22.
cf. 2 Chron.
20. 23.

cannot be too attentive to the way in which Scripture speaks, whether we can interpret it or not. But if it be the lion, the lion manifestly is the expression of regal power of the king; and thus it is the king, as it were, that calls forth the king; and if it be Christ as the Lamb slain, (it does not say *sacrificed*, but "slain"—the rejected One,) then we can understand how suitable it is that the human conqueror should come forth in answer to the call. Alas, the Prince of peace has been rejected, and war and conquest, the overturning of things, naturally ensue, because He whose right it is is rejected and gone. Thus the Lord speaks to His disciples, in His prophecy on Olivet, of wars and rumors of wars characterizing the interim before He comes again.

The white horse does not necessarily speak at all here of purity, or righteousness. It is the symbol of victory; and the bow speaks, apparently, of that which is far-reaching. The crown is given to him as the issue of it. It is not said by whom, but evidently it is acquired by conquest, and thus he goes on for the present time unchecked. A wide rule therefore must naturally be his. Such an one, moreover, one would say, must be given us elsewhere in prophecy, and must have reference to events that are to come afterwards. He must be prominent in these.

It would certainly seem, accordingly, that we can find one who answers to the picture here; and for those who have learnt what the seventeenth chapter will definitely teach us,—that the Roman empire, long since passed away, is yet to revive in an exceptional manner and for a short time only, yet in a way deeply significant of the approaching end,—it will not be difficult to imagine that here we may have what speaks of this. In fact, there seems little reason to doubt that the seventh head of the beast is here before us; although to make this plain requires a reference to much other scripture which it is hardly the place to look at yet. Only let it be remembered that "the prince that shall come," and who is to initiate that seven years' covenant with "the many" of Israel which defines for us that last week of Daniel's seventy, (which is the end of the time determined upon Israel and Jerusalem, at the close of which their final blessing is to come,) this prince is decisively a *Roman* prince. It is "the people of the prince that shall come" that have already, under Titus, destroyed the city and the sanctuary; but the prince himself is still to come. And if he come, and we are correct as to the period at which we have arrived here, then he must come forth at the very beginning of it, and it would be no wonder to find him thus at the outset thereof before us.

It is most naturally by conquest that the place he acquires is to be attained, and we have had already in late history one who, though only for a brief period, yet in connection with this same territory of ancient Rome, has shown us how possible it is for such power to be suddenly acquired. Napoleon was indeed but a shadow of events to come—a shadow which quickly passed; but even thus it is proverbial that the history that is to come has its anticipation often and presage. We must leave this, however, for the present, with this mere reference.

² When the second seal is removed, we have the call of the second living being, that is of the ox. In answer to this, another horse comes forth, red, the color of blood; and to his rider it is given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another. It is not the career of a conqueror that is represented here, but a general taking away of peace—every one's hand, as it were, against his brother; thus civil war in all its dread reality. That a great sword

³ (5, 6): The third seal removed; the call of the human-faced cherub.

³ And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living being say, ^d Come. And I saw, and behold a ^e black horse, and he that sat upon it having a ^f balance in his hand. And I heard, as it were, a voice in the midst of the four living beings saying, A ^g measure of wheat for a shilling,* and three measures of barley for a shilling; and hurt thou not the oil and the wine.

d cf. Lk. 14
16, etc. with
Lev. 26. 26.
e Zech. 6. 2.
f cf. Is. 60. 3.
g cf. Ezek. 4.
9, 10, 16, 17.
g cf. Deut.
28. 54, 55.
ctr. Deut. 8.
9.

* Literally, "a denarius:" which is nearest a shilling of current coin.

is given to the horseman is meant; of course, to emphasize the destruction following. This is plainly the suited answer to the call of the second cherub; for the ox is the type of the laborer, the minister to man's need, the expression of a service by which all men are bound together. Such ministry is necessitated by that actual dependence upon one another which God has appointed to hide pride from man, and that love may be called into exercise.

This is what in Christ has fullest expression, this ministry to a need which no one but He Himself could relieve; and Christ rejected can be nothing else but that which surely, however slowly, withers all such service. God manifest in Him has been rejected; and just as, if received and God having His place, all things would be in necessary harmony, so, if rejected, all must be out of joint and in disorder. Man having cast off divine authority, the beasts of the earth cast off the divinely appointed human authority; and affection cast off where it should be most natural, the natural affection necessarily withers. There has been initiated a disorder which cannot stop until all natural ties are sundered, and love is turned (as it may how easily be turned) into deadliest opposition. We see under this second seal that the evil is a growing one. There is in it no tendency to self-healing, but the contrary,—corruption grows worse and worse; return to God is the only possible remedy; but there is no return.*

³ The third seal is now removed, and with this we have the call of the human-faced cherub. At his call a black horse comes forth—the funereal color; and the rider has in his hand a balance, which a voice in the midst of the living beings interprets with the words "a measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling." The measure, or *chaenix*, was at most about a quart, although some would say but a pint and a half. The shilling, or *denarius*, (the "penny" of the Gospels,) was in fact neither of these, but about the half of a shilling *sterling*.† It was, as we see in the parable, the ordinary day's wages, when money was far more valuable than it is at present; and the *chaenix* of wheat was considered the provision for a day. Ordinarily the *denarius* would purchase about eight quarts of wheat, but now all that a man could earn could scarcely feed himself. No doubt three measures of barley could be got for the same price; but this was not only coarser food, but would even yet imply great scarcity. Yet with all, the oil and the wine were not to be injured. One can see clearly how peace taken from the earth would involve what follows here; the oil and the wine being naturally less injured than the growth of the field, which constantly needs to be renewed. But here, of course, it is divine judgment; and the natural effect is therefore exceeded.

The congruity of this judgment with the call of the third living being is not

* The ox is the badge of patient strength yielded up in service for man's need, even unto death, laying down its life for man's food. It is the type of what our blessed Lord's life was, particularly as set forth in Mark—the Gospel of the perfect Servant. His was a love that sought not its own, but labored ever for man's need; accomplishing in His death, as sin-offering, that great service which has forever set us before God blameless. For rejectors of such grace what can there be, as a necessary result of the selfishness which ends in slaying others, instead of rescuing them? With the rejection of the peaceful ox, peace is taken from the earth. How plainly can the beginning of this be seen even now, though the One who hinders prevents full development "till He be taken out of the way"!—S. R.

† What is called a "shilling" in the eastern United States (where the cent is also called a "penny") is the nearest to an equivalent.

⁴ (7, 8): The fourth seal removed; the call of the eagle.

* And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard * the fourth living being say, ^aCome. And I saw, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat upon it was ^aDeath, and hades followed with him. And there was given him † authority over the ^afourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

*h cf. Heb. 12. 25.
cf. Lk. 17. 37.
i cf. Acts 3. 15.
cf. Rom. 8. 23.
j cf. Ezek. 14. 21.
cf. ch. 8. 7.*

* Some MSS insert "the voice of." † Some read "them."

so easy to be understood as in the former cases. Were we permitted to spiritualize it, and think of what Amos proclaims,—“Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord,”—such a famine would, on the other hand, suit well; for the face of a man reminds us how God has met us in Christ and revealed Himself to us, inviting our confidence, speaking with a human tongue that He may be fully understood and appreciated by us: and this familiar intercourse with Him is what is needed for true satisfaction. If then Christ be rejected, the necessary consequence is that the sustenance for the soul is lost, the bread from heaven disappears, and the world is indeed a desert unrelieved. But, as we have seen, the destitution under the third seal seems rather to be the natural result of what has already taken place. Conquest and civil war would necessarily largely interfere with the work of the field and all that was dependent upon it; while the oil and the wine might more easily escape. A literal famine therefore seems to be intended. Yet as the natural is everywhere the type of the spiritual, so it depends upon that to which it witnesses. Our common mercies are ours through Christ alone. Take away the One, the other goes—the shadow with the true substance: and though little heeded, God might thus appeal to those incapable of feeling spiritual famine by the pressure of that which was natural. While, in the long-suffering of God, His sun shines upon the evil and upon the good, and the rain is sent upon the just and upon the unjust, yet how little do men realize this dependence of the natural upon the spiritual, and how Christ rejected strikes at once at every blessing!*

⁴ We have now the fourth seal removed, and the call of the eagle. There follows that which in some sense is evidently final. A pale horse comes forth, and the name of its rider is Death; and hades reaps along his path. Here mercy seems to interpose a stricter limit; but authority is given him over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword and with famine and with death, and by the beasts of the earth. “Death” is the common term for pestilence, as the plague of the Middle Ages, for instance, was called the Black Death; and here God’s “four sore judgments” are let loose at once (Ezek. xiv. 21). If we think of the Gospels here, it is plain how the judgment corresponds to the rejection of the blessing which John’s Gospel brings us, the Gospel of love and life and light: and this rejected, what can remain for its rejectors but the awful, eternal rejection which death, as here under the wrath of God, must needs introduce them to? And then we cannot fail to remember that the eagle is itself the symbol of judgment, and, as the Lord says, speaking of this time, “Whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Here, then, is the natural end of this first series of the seals—a complete end but for the limit of divine

* In Luke we have the parable of the great supper, and of the feast on the return of the prodigal who but lately had been near to “perish with hunger.” The rejection of the blessed Man who came to minister to our need, and to tell of the Father’s house where there is “bread enough and to spare,” may well lead to both literal and spiritual famine. The oil and wine were the food of the rich. The expression may indicate the great care not to waste these products. If, as is intimated in the text, they were not so much injured as the ordinary staples of life, it might show, as is always the case, that the luxuries of the rich are least affected in a time of strait. It is the poor who suffer most, even for that which will sustain life. Luke also dwells on the abundance of the rich as contrasted with the penury of the poor. See the rich fool in chap. xii., and the rich man and Lazarus, chap. xvi.—S. R.

2 (vi. 9-viii. 5): The divine side of redemption, and the differentiation which results.

1 (vi. 9-11): The fifth seal removed:

the exercise of the righteous with regard to the government of God.

2. ¹ And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw beneath the altar the souls of them that had been ^{*}slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O sovereign Ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and ^mavenge our blood on them that ⁿdwell on the earth? And there was given to them each a ⁿwhite robe; and it was said to them that they should rest yet

k cf. Matt. 24. 9.

l Ps. 13. 1.

m cf. Ps. 94. 1-6.

cf. Lk. 18. 3.

n ch. 3. 10.

o cf. ch. 19. 8.

mercy. After all, the bow of promise is upon these clouds of most awful judgment, and the earth is to issue from beneath them baptized into a new condition, and with the promise, from the mere goodness of God, that such judgment as this shall be no more.

2. Three seals remain, and now, as it is plain, we have a larger range of view, and God's side of things comes to be shown us. We have in it redemption's harvest; and if on the one side there is still an ever increasing catastrophe, we are nevertheless shown how fully all things are in the hands of One who has power, and title also, according to His own nature to act for blessing, spite of the fullest display of creature-evil that can be made.

¹ The fifth seal is now removed, and we have what is wholly different from anything before it: that which on the one hand shows us the present exercise of the righteousness of the government of God, and the answer to it that is to come when divine patience has done all that can be done by it. When the fifth seal is opened there is no cry of a cherub any more, but there is another appeal, the cry of men that have been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they bare for Him. These cry with a loud voice, "How long, O sovereign Ruler, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Just such a cry has in fact been going up to God since the blood of Abel stained the earth. And so the Lord speaks to those who in His day were joining the ranks of all the persecutors of His own from the beginning: "Shall not," He asks, "God judge His own elect who cry unto Him, though He bear long with them?"

But the cry here is not the general cry of all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, but something special to the time at which we have arrived here. We may notice that the "souls under the altar" (the altar of burnt-offerings) plainly speak of these as a sacrifice that has been given to God. The blood of such sacrifices was poured out at the bottom of the altar; and in the life-blood, the soul—which is also the life—is said to be poured out. Thus in the fifty-third of Isaiah it is said of Christ that He "poured out His soul unto death;" and here we have at once the implication of the acceptance on the part of God of this offering of His people. Offering as it was, there was, as in the Lord's case, another side to it: cruel hands had shed this blood,—the blood of a numberless multitude, like to the saints upon their thrones above, as we have been contemplating them; for here they are *beneath the altar still*, and only in answer to their cry is the white robe of manifest approval given to them. Nor is the cry here such as we find in the Lord's own mouth, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" nor as in Stephen's case, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." There is not in it the witness of grace, but the call for judgment; and it indicates the taking up of the old martyr cry, the passing of the long parenthesis of grace upon the earth, during which God has been gathering a people for heaven. It is the day of wrath and judgment that is at hand, and thus it is of God that they should cry for judgment. It is this fellowship with God in His thoughts that makes, on the one hand, the prayer for mercy that which alone suits us now, and, on the other, the cry for judgment that which will yet suit those who are here found waiting for a judgment which is ready to be executed.

² (vi. 12-17):
The sixth
seal re-
moved: the
overthrow
of all class-
es, bringing
the end in
view.

a little while until both their fellow-servants and their brethren, who were ²about to be killed as they, should be fulfilled.*

² And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great ²earthquake; and the sun became ²black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell upon the earth, as a

p cf. ch. 13
15.
cf. ch. 20.4

q cf. Matt
24. 7.
r cf. Joel 2.
10, 31.
cf. Matt. 24
29.

* That is, till the number should be filled up.

But we have to notice that they are bidden to rest yet a little while, until their fellow-servants and their brethren who were about to be killed as they were should be fulfilled. Thus there is the intimation of a further company to be added to these still before the final judgment comes; and a comparison with other scriptures will make plain what is intended here. Thus, in the twentieth chapter, we read of what is a supplementary resurrection, an addition to the first resurrection of the righteous, which includes the two companies that are indicated here. We have in it a threefold distinction: First, there are thrones and those sitting upon them, to whom judgment is given. There is in this case, although constantly confounded with the others, no thought of resurrection as then taking place. They are simply living and sit upon the thrones, as we have found living saints so seated already, in that look into heaven which has just been permitted us. Secondly, there are souls—that is, according to a common use of the word at all times, persons—beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, exactly as here. These are a company of martyrs, and *all* martyrs, as is plain. It is not, therefore, a general resurrection of the righteous dead, who are not all martyrs, nor could be characterized therefore in this way. But there is a third company also—"such as have not worshiped the beast, nor his image, nor received his mark upon their forehead or on their hand." These, too, are martyrs, but martyrs under a persecution which we have yet to look at, and which follows in the course of the prophecy here. It is not now the place to speak of them more particularly, but that they are a special class is undeniably evident. These all together complete the picture of the first resurrection, and they live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Thus we have what explains fully what is given us under this fifth seal.*

² The opening of the sixth seal follows, and now what is before us comes more distinctly into view. Men are predicting for themselves the wrath of the Lamb, the great day of which is, in their guilty dread, thought to be now come. Thus, when the sixth seal is opened, there is a great earthquake, the sun becoming black as sackcloth of hair and the whole moon as blood, and the stars of heaven falling upon the earth, as a fig tree casts its untimely figs when shaken by a great wind. The heaven is removed as a scroll rolled up, and every mountain and island removed out of their places. Here there can be no right question that the description is figurative; for if we took it literally, then we should be plainly at the end even of the Millennium itself; for not till then does the first heaven pass away, as is here depicted. Otherwise, the signs are much as those which the Lord gives as taking place before the coming of the Son of man. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30). This is, however, after that great tribulation such as never was, which itself necessarily precedes His coming, and which is in fact

* These martyrs under the fifth seal are apparently those slain during the first half of Daniel's seventieth week, and not during the last half, or period of the "great tribulation." The whole time will be one of unexampled persecution; but this is intensified during the last three and a half years, the period which for the "elect's sake" has been shortened.—S. R.

fig-tree casteth its untimely figs, when shaken by a great wind. And the 'heaven was removed as a scroll rolled up, and every 'mountain and island were removed out of their places. And the "kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the 'rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, "hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks,

s cf. Ps. 82.1,
6. 7.
ctr. 2 Pet. 3.
10.
t cf. Jer. 3. 23.
ch. 16. 20.
u cf. Ps. 2. 2.
cf. Dan. 2.
21.
v cf. Lk. 6. 24.
cf. Jas. 5. 1.
w Is. 2. 19.

that tribulation under the beast which is referred to at the end of the last seal, but referred to there as still future; nor is there room for it in what is before us here. We shall find it spoken of in its own place in the future. But then it is still more evident, if possible, that the signs here are not physical signs, although they take, as one may say, their complexion from that which is coming. In men's minds, indeed, the day of the Lamb's wrath is already come; but we shall find that, near as it may be, much intervenes before it will indeed become.

Such signs as these we have elsewhere in the prophets, as in Joel (chap. ii. 31): "The sun shall be changed into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come." In Isaiah (chap. xxxiv. 4), a prophecy of the destruction of Edom, with its after-desolation, we have, "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." Both passages seem to refer, the last at least ultimately, to the time of the end when the Lord comes; but the expressions in their connection show that we cannot take literally the dissolution of the heavens as pictured in them. After the judgment here, Idumea lies in perfect desolation: "From generation to generation," it is said, "it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever;" and when the Lord comes no such convulsion of nature takes place as that which we read here, if we are to take it literally. On the other hand, the meaning of it as a symbol is not hard to apprehend. The heavens are even in a physical sense what rule the earth; and they are used in Scripture as figuring in this way earthly government, the basis of which we have in the typical significance of the work of the second day (Gen. i. 6-8). This has been dwelt upon in its place. The earthquake thus may speak of a great political convulsion, in which the royal or imperial power suffers defeat, is as if extinguished, and the lesser dignities, which represent it with derived authority, as the moon would indicate, sharing in the catastrophe, until all rule seems to be gone and no condition is safe—even where there seemed strength as a mountain, or separation from all around as an island. The result is indicated in what follows, that "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman," hide themselves in fear, seeing in it the wrath of the Lamb. Such an event upon a smaller scale we may find in that French Revolution, out of which came that which for a time altered the face of the earth; and here the political catastrophe involved the ecclesiastical sphere as well. All that spoke of religion seemed for the moment gone. What we have here in Revelation is, of course, of far wider extent, but can scarcely be more radical than that which in a small sphere then took place.*

Here, in a sense, the seals end; for although there is another, yet it is manifest that it only introduces the trumpet-calls that follow; and if we consider the whole character implied in these seals, it is plain that the opening of the last seal simply *opens the book*. Those before have been introductory, and show us what opens it. What an introduction is we have fully in them—the elements of

* As is intimated in the opening paragraph upon the sixth seal, the fear of those who hide themselves does not prove that the final day of the Lamb's wrath had come, but rather that the fear of it was upon men's souls. As a matter of fact, more fearful judgments are yet to be poured out.—S. R.

*Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who can stand?

x cf. Hos. 10.
8.
Lk. 23. 30.
y ctr. ch. 20.
11.
cf. Matt. 25.
31, etc.

z ctr. ch. 5. 6, 9, 12; cf. Ps. 2. 12. a cf. Is. 13. 6; cf. Matt. 24. 8.

that which is still to come before us. We have before the seventh seal a double vision which is evidently parenthetical, itself introductory and manifestly looking on to the future, but of a very different kind from all that has been before. This we will look at fully directly; but in considering the seals as a series, as they have been now before us, we need not enter into it. The question that is naturally suggested now is, how far in these seals we have exact events at all. Their often noted connection with the opening of the Lord's prophecy on the mount of Olives will show clearly what is meant. In this we have, before the announcement of the abomination of desolation in the holy place and the tribulation following, what is more general in character: "wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places;" then persecutions of the Lord's people, with the uprising of false prophets, who shall deceive many. This last, with the still worse pretension of false Christs, of which the Lord speaks, we have not yet in Revelation. Otherwise the resemblance, or identity rather, of the two prophecies is evident. Details are as absent from one as from the other. Exact events are not shown us, only that there is a period in which, as one may say, the character of that which is to come is beginning to be seen. It is quite simple that there should be in this way a time in which things are shaping themselves; the Lord no doubt giving to the wise in heart, who can discern, to see what is before them. Of such a period the seals naturally speak. To the wise in heart the book of prophecy is being opened, the seals upon it are being broken, but the full reality has not yet emerged.

³ We must now look at the parenthetical visions. Here, as already said, we are in a different atmosphere from that which we have realized before. We have the actings of God rather than of man; with the result of these in grace for men. They open the book more thoroughly than anything hitherto: for without them everything would be mere confusion, or almost this. Here we find God's purpose, what He is accomplishing; and thus we gain fully the point of view from which all the rest can be beheld aright. The vision, as already said, is double. We have, on the one hand, and in the first place, the sealing of 144,000 out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. The specification as to each tribe follows, as if to impress upon us how literally we are to take it; all the more that in the second vision, in contrast with this, we have a multitude that no man can number, but now "out of every tribe, nation, and people, and tongue."

Jews and Gentiles are here, in short, plainly distinguished. Nor can this be strange to those who have considered how we are led up to it. The Church is passed from the earth. The Lord's people (not Christians only, but those of past generations) are gathered home. They are in glory, reigning upon their thrones around the throne; while the new beginning, which plainly must follow this as to God's dealings with the earth, is indicated by the Lamb coming forward as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Judah is first among the tribes here sealed. It is the royal tribe, as we know, the tribe of David, and in which the promise of perpetual royalty is made to him. This, it should be plain, has nothing to do with the Church, with her hopes or prospects, except so far as she is associated with Christ in that rule which is now in His hands as Son of man; but if the Jews thus come once more into view as in a distinct way the people of God, the Gentiles naturally have their distinct place also. The Old Testament prophets always speak after this manner, and we have only to read them simply to realize how different is the state of things that we are contemplating from that of the time in which God is, as now, gathering Jews and Gentiles into one body, as co-heirs equally of the inheritance which is to come.

³ (vii.): The divine realization.
 α (1-8): Israel's election of grace.

³ α And after this I saw four ^bangels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding the four ^cwinds of the earth, that no wind should blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree. And I saw an-

^b cf. ch. 8. 2, etc.
 cf. Ps. 103. 20, 21.
 c cf. Dan. 7. 2.
 cf. Eph. 2.2 with Job 1. 18, 19.

This is what we find, then, intimated on the first view. We see that we have to take Israel here as literal Israel. This is said by some to involve a contradiction of the general principles of the interpretation of the book of Revelation. Interpreters say we must take it *all* as symbolical, or *all* as literal; otherwise we are simply interpreting as we please, and all stability of interpretation is set aside. But this, as it is easy to show, is simple misapprehension, and has led those who adopt it as a rule, into manifest absurdities. On the one hand it has presented us with such monstrosities as "supernatural, infernal, not earthly locusts," but which are, nevertheless, to be taken as *literally that!* We are told "it is a day of miracle, surely a day of wonders, a day of fierce and tormenting wrath. It is everywhere so described in the Scriptures, and we do greatly mistreat the records which God has given for our learning if we allow the skeptical rationalizing of our own darkened hearts to persuade us that such supernatural things are impossible, and therefore must not be literally understood." Yet when we come to the "beast" of the thirteenth chapter, we are told (rightly enough) by the same interpreter, that we have here *not* a "literal" beast, but "a symbolical presentation of the political sovereignty of this world."

On the other hand, this rule of perfect consistency, as interpreted by others, must require us to blot Israel entirely out of such a prophecy as this, and from all place therefore in those Old Testament promises which the apostle assures us belong to his "kindred according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 4). The fact is, the consistency so much advocated cannot be maintained in this way for even the briefest moment in interpreting the book of Revelation. Thus, for instance, under the fifth seal, we have a symbolical altar, and in connection with it "souls" that can scarcely be symbolically slain for the word of God. Nor can this be said of their fellow-servants and their brethren who are about to be killed as they were. Such a mingling of the literal and symbolic in one vision is only a sample of what will be found in almost the whole series of visions; and if it be asked, How then are we to distinguish between the literal and the symbolical? the answer should be plain that we are to judge, as it is so necessary always, *by the whole context*, and therefore by the *wider and more important consistency* of such visions as a whole—a thing which is unhappily but too little attended to by such interpreters. Symbols, of necessity, require in us all something of "the mind that has wisdom." They are supposed to require attention and exercise as to their meaning, and are by no means intended to make everything plain to the dumbest as to the clearest, spiritually. All is fully open to us, but we must not make any prophecy of Scripture of private (that is, isolated) interpretation, as the apostle warns us; and the observance of this rule (which the apostle gives us as "first of all" to be observed) will necessitate much useful searching of Scripture, as well as what should be most profitable meditation upon it. The Spirit of God is in it and in us also, blessed be His name; and we are dependent upon Him everywhere to guide us into all truth. But the truth will speak to the true, and God deals with us as those who should be competent thus to look everywhere beneath the surface. "In all labor there is profit," and here assuredly our labor shall not go unrewarded.

α Four angels are now seen standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding in restraint the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree. Manifestly here again all is symbolic. The winds of the earth are the various influences which from outside affect it; surely not *divine* influences, or they would not need to be restrained, but rather the power of the enemy working: for Satan, as we learn elsewhere, is "the prince of the power of the air," and the course of this age is thus under

other angel ascending from [the] sun-rising, having [the] ^dseal of [the] living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it had been given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, ^eHurt not the earth nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the servants* of our God upon their foreheads.

d cfr. Eph. 1. 13.
e cf. Ezek. 9. 4-7.
e cf. 2Thess. 2. 7.
cf Gen. 19. 22.

* δούλους, "bond-servants."

his control. God is above all, as we see now. Nothing is but as it is permitted to be, and this is the security of His people, whatever may be the adverse circumstances through which they pass. The earth seems always to speak of that which is settled under government, as we may say, as the sea cannot be, which speaks in general of unrestrained will—thus of the nations, looked at as away from God. The tree is individual, one specially prominent, rooted in the earth, as it might seem. A time is coming which shall test all this.

And now another angel ascends from the sun-rising. Not without significance, surely, is the east so spoken of here. The Sun is about to rise, and with this the action of the angel is associated. He has the seal of the living God, and cries with a loud voice to the four angels, saying, "Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads." Here it is said that to the four angels it was given to hurt the earth and the sea. Thus the judgment is in the hand of God, although the instruments may be working their own will. The angels have "power to hurt" simply because they have power to restrain, or not, the adverse influences. There is thus a time of quiet and comparative security until God has accomplished His own work in those that serve Him; "until we shall have sealed," says the angel, "the servants of our God upon their foreheads."

We cannot separate from this (in character at least) what we find of the 144,000 in the fourteenth chapter, who there stand with the Lamb upon mount Zion, and upon whose foreheads the name of His Father is seen written. This would be according to what sealing is in Scripture, the seal being a *stamp*, which here marks out manifestly those who are the Lord's. The seal is upon the forehead, where most seen, and would seem to intimate the fearlessness of their confession. We have to distinguish here between what we have in the epistle to the Ephesians as to the seal of the Spirit, if only by the fact that here the sealing is angelic, and no angel could put the seal of the Spirit upon men. It may be thought, on the other hand, that the angel here is Christ, as He certainly appears afterwards in such a character (chap. x. 1); but against this there is the fact that he associates others with himself, whether they be the four previous angels or not. He says, "until *we* have sealed." Even here it might be possibly thought that the "we" was meant to associate the Spirit of God with himself, but the language following—"the servants of *our* God"—surely forbids this. Christ could Himself speak as man, and, as we know, He commonly does so; but the Spirit of God, while He works in man, has not become man, and thus the language seems inapplicable.

This, no doubt, makes the nature of the sealing less clear than otherwise it might be. On the other hand, the seal of the Spirit, as spoken of in Ephesians, could hardly be found at a time when the Church is gone from the earth, and thus, with the Church, the indwelling of the Spirit. Lange says that we cannot suppose the apostle John to have a lower conception of sealing than the apostle Paul; but that is not at all the question, for the inspired writer does not speak according to any mere conception of his own, but according to the way in which he is instructed, and therefore according to the nature of that which is before him. The purport of the seal is that it marks out the one sealed as belonging to God; and thus, as we find afterwards (chap. ix. 4), it becomes security from the locust-plague. It is the seal of the "living God," who, as this, abides to

And I heard the number of those that were sealed: a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand; of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; of the

f cf. ch. 14. 1.
g cf. Gen. 49.
 8. 27.
cf. Deut. 33.
 6-25.
cf. Ezek. 48.
 1-7, 23-28.

care for and preserve that which is His own. In the Ephesian sense of sealing, we can as little understand the four winds having to be restrained that it might be done, as we can understand the angel being the agent in it. The action of the angels is certainly, as we should say, providential, and operates upon circumstances surrounding, rather than inwardly upon the soul. But we are incompetent, perhaps, to say more than that in some way God manifests His own, perhaps indeed by circumstances that bring them into special prominence, and make plain whose they are; and if we are to judge by the consequent preservation of those sealed under the locust woe, we might think that this seal of the living God marked out those who would be preserved alive for blessing upon the earth, in contrast with those slain under the beast, and who find their place in heaven. God is certainly at work to preserve through all this time of exceeding distress and danger a people for Himself, as we shall find in the flight of the woman into the wilderness, in the twelfth chapter, to a place where she is kept from the power of the dragon. Outside of this, there is a seed more open to attack, and which we find suffering afterwards under the persecution of the beast. But all this, as yet, cannot be entered into.

Those who are sealed are said specifically to be 144,000, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel. The tribes are then named, but in a peculiar manner, which would no doubt reveal to us more as to them if we had more intelligence or capacity. The order in which they are enumerated is found nowhere else, and is peculiar in the way in which the sons of different mothers—wives and concubines—are mingled together. If we follow the usual division of 12 into 4×3 , we have, as Lange says, "first, two sons of Leah and one of her maid—Judah, Reuben, Gad. Secondly, Leah's adopted son Asher, Rachel's adopted son Naphtali, and Manasseh the first-born of Joseph. The third triad is formed by Leah's sons, Simeon and Levi, and her adopted son Issachar. In the fourth group Zebulon is conjoined with Joseph and Benjamin—the late offspring of Leah with the late offspring of Rachel." On a general survey, he adds, "The thought forces itself upon our mind that the vision in its symbolistic enumeration of the twelve tribes has obliterated every semblance of a legal prerogative apart from Judah's place of honor, which again was symbolically significant of the dignity of Christ." Others again take it that such a promiscuous enumeration is given us for the very purpose of intimating that these are not literally Israel's tribes at all. But this has been, in another way, and quite satisfactorily, decided for us.

We may gather from it apparently one thing, and that is, that we have before us not simply the nation preserved (and thus they are not given in the order in which they would be even in the wilderness camp, and much more in the land), but that here is a special remnant marked out, and of which we ought to be able to see more at another time. The absence of Dan from the enumeration is significant in this way; as assuredly, when the tribes are brought back to their land at last, Dan will not be wanting among them. Here the prophecy of Jacob their father (which is, in a way beyond what is ordinarily seen, significant of their whole future history) will assist us much, as well as in answering the question as to the reason of the omission. Jacob himself lets us know (Gen. xlix.) that he is speaking of what should befall them "in the last days." It is to these "last days" that Revelation has brought us, so that the application of his words to what is before us here should be the more evident.

Let us listen, then, to what the dying patriarch has to say of Dan: "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the

tribe of Asher, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Nephthalim, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand; of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand sealed.

way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels so that the rider shall fall backward. I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord." Evidently there is something here, even in its very enigmatic form, to awaken attention; and it is quite startling in the way that it answers questions which the omission of Dan in this list of the tribes will naturally awaken. Dan, as we see, is *not* to drop out of the number of these. On the contrary,—and let us remember that it is of the last days that Jacob is speaking,—“*Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.*” Thus the Lord’s grace prevails, whatever may be the failure that we find in Dan. It cannot be that a tribe should perish out of the chosen people. But then, if this be a special company, and if we should find this same company at a later time associated with the Lamb upon mount Zion (chap. xiv. 1), then one might naturally say that Dan *has* lost this place of association with the King of Israel. Yet, says Jacob, “*Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel.*” How remarkable is this, put just as if there might be a question about it, and yet, on the other hand, giving Dan certainly no prominence, as in fact in those last days he will be found but as the border tribe in the land (Ezek. xlviii. 1). Dan shall retain his tribal staff, and that is all. But why should he seem thus to be under question? If not in rejection, yet why, apparently, in this lowly place? Have we not the answer to this also in Jacob’s words, “*Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that the rider falleth backward*”? Here, for those who know the character of these “*last days*” of which Jacob is speaking, it will not be without significance that Dan is thus associated with and characterized by the power of the enemy, as if it had so far prevailed for his perversion. When we know that the large part of Israel in those days will fall into apostasy, surely the serpent and the adder, here distinctly identified with Dan, must be pregnant with meaning: and how much more so when we find immediately following, as it were, the groan of the remnant of those days, “*I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord!*”

Notice how, in the final blessing of the tribes by Jacob, we find the suited termination of this. As to Gad, a conflict in which, first overcome, he shall nevertheless overcome at last. Then, with Asher and Naphtali we have what manifestly speaks of blessing following; while Joseph and Benjamin, completing the history, show us in whom the blessing is. All, therefore, is most perfectly in keeping throughout; and we are not arguing from any mere isolated expressions, as some would suggest, but giving everything its due place and connection. The prophecy has already been considered in its place in Genesis.

We have only now to speak of the number 144,000 (12,000 of each tribe). Although it may be according to the literal truth, yet it speaks rather of a symbolical meaning. Twelve, as we everywhere see, is the number of manifest government—ordinarily at least, we may say, if not always, of *divine* government, though men may be given their place in connection with it. Certainly the number here is suggestive of just such thoughts, the thousand, moreover, being the cube of 10; and 10 as a double 5 (which seems to be all that there is in it) speaks at the same time of responsibility, and capacity, and reward. How suited is everything we see here—even if there be much we have not seen yet—to give such a character to these sealed Israelites as we have suggested!*

* The fact that those sealed are a remnant out of the mass of the nation will sufficiently characterize them. They are, doubtless, similar in character to the remnant spoken of in Ezek.

b (9-17):
The saved
Gentiles
brought out
of the
great tri-
bulation.

b After these things I saw, and lo, a ^agreat multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with 'white robes, and palm branches in their hands. And they cry with a loud voice saying, 'Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And ^kall the angels stood round the throne and the elders* and the four living beings,* and fell before the throne upon their faces and worshiped God, saying, Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and strength, unto our God, to the ages of ages. Amen.

h cf. Rom.
11. 25.
cf. Is. 60. 5.

i cf. ch. 6. 11.

j cf. Ps. 118.
14, 15, 25.
ch. 19. 1.

k ch. 5. 11,
etc.

* These also are governed by the preposition "round."

b The apostle now has another vision, which naturally would have connection with the first, as well as probably be in some way contrasted with it. Here there is no more a company of Israelites that demands our attention, but a great multitude which no man can number, "out of every nation, and tribe, and people, and tongue." These then must be, largely at least, Gentiles. If we think of all that has been before us, we should say, rather, that they are exclusively Gentiles. If the Church has gone out to meet her Lord, and the Lion of the tribe of Judah it is who has taken manifest rule, and with Him a special remnant of Israel has already been seen in association, then, being in the line of Old Testament promises, which are Israel's, we must expect to find the Gentiles having a place indeed in blessing, but still a separate place from these. This company stands "before the throne, and before the Lamb." They are "clothed with white robes, and palm branches in their hands; and they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb." They are thus partakers of the salvation which they have ascribed to God and the Lamb. They are clothed also with white robes, the token of full and final acceptance; and the palm branches in their hands speak of victory gained. Their being "before the throne and before the Lamb," may naturally, at first sight, declare them to be a heavenly company—a company in fact in heaven; and this, though with various application, is the thought in general of interpreters as to them. And indeed heaven is open to us. We see all the angels standing "around the throne and the elders and the living beings," and hear them as they fall upon their faces, worshiping God, saying, "Amen: blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and strength, unto our God, to the ages of ages."

But let us wait for what follows this. One of the elders puts plainly the question to the seer, "These who are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they?" But John himself is evidently at a loss to say. "My lord," he answers, "thou knowest." Then we have the words which clearly and decisively explain who they are: "These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun in any wise fall upon them, nor any burning heat; because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Plainly these words speak of full blessing attained. Some of

ix. 4: "Set a mark upon the forehead* of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst" of Jerusalem. That sealing, too, was preliminary to the slaughter about to be inflicted upon the ungodly mass. That which ever characterizes a remnant is the moral state of grief and horror at abounding evil. Such, says the Lord, "shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."—S. R.

And one of the 'elders answered saying unto me, These who are clothed in white robes, who are they? And whence came they? And I said unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they that come out of the "great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them "white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they "before the throne of

l cf. Eph. 3.
10.
m cf. Dan.
12. 1.
cf. Jer. 30. 7.
cf. Matt. 24.
21, 22.
cf. ch. 3. 10.
n cf. 1 Jno. 1.
7.
cf. Zech. 3.
3-5.
o ver. 9.

them would seem as plainly to say, at first sight, that they are as certainly in heaven as the elders themselves; but let us look a little further.

They are all said to come out of the great tribulation, and this is emphasized. It is literally "the tribulation, the great one," as impressing upon us to make no mistake. There is but one tribulation that can be spoken of after this manner—that tribulation of which Daniel speaks (chap. xii. 1) as a "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time;" and when Daniel's "people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Thus it is the time of which Jeremiah speaks, "the time of Jacob's trouble," but out of which he shall be delivered (Jer. xxx. 7). It is the time also of which the Lord speaks in His familiar prophecy, in which He expressly refers also to Daniel (Matt. xxiv. 15-21)—a time of "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be." Immediately after this tribulation, there is the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and He comes in the clouds of heaven with the angels. Thus we cannot possibly be deceived as to where this brings us; and we find that we are looking forward in a vision here to what has not as yet had its place in the prophecy. In fact, we are looking on to the time when the Son of man has come. These are a special group, then. They are not the company of all the saints from the beginning, but those of one brief time; for "except those days should be shortened, no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. xxiv. 22).

That they are clothed in white robes is of importance in different ways. It shows that they are past the judgment of works; they are not merely themselves accepted personally, but are owned of the Lord in that which has been of Him in their life and ways. The white raiment, we are told in the nineteenth chapter, is the righteousnesses of the saints. There is a needful admonition here against what we are so prone to, the attributing a sort of uniformity to Scripture which is in reality the product merely of the narrowness of our own minds, and which begets confusion instead of clearness. Scripture is larger and more various than we take it to be. It is probable that most Christians take these white robes as being simply Christ as the righteousness of His people; but at once comes the question, How could a robe like this be *washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb*? Every one will say that is impossible, of course; then the robe in this case is not the righteousness which is given us in Christ Himself. It is not Christ as righteousness to us, but, as already said, the righteousnesses (the word is plural) of our works and ways, which must have the stamp of His approval before we can be accredited with them, before we can stand in the value that grace may give them in His sight. But how much is there in our works and ways that He can never approve! Here then is where the precious blood must be applied; not to ourselves merely, but to our *garments*. They must be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. We see at once how suited this is to the book of the throne and of judgment, which the book of Revelation assuredly is; and we see also how necessary it is to discriminate between scripture and scripture, and to distinguish things in which there may be at first sight apparent similarity. This applies equally to such great truths as those of salvation, redemption, sanctification, nay, even justification, where much of the confusion which obtains among the Lord's people is the result simply of forgetting how large and various Scripture thoughts are. We do not reach consistent inter-

pretation by ignoring these differences which so constantly exist. Here, as already said, the company before us are plainly seen to have stood before the judgment-seat of Christ, and to have received His estimate of their lives as He has seen them.

Thus "are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple"—words in which again we shall be called to discriminate between apparently similar things. The elders are before the throne, and we naturally think of those who are before it here as being in heaven with the elders, and practically therefore as one company with these. But the words "serve Him day and night in His temple" are just the words which could not be used of the elders, for John explicitly says of the New Jerusalem, "I saw *no* temple therein." Here we *have* a temple; and the question necessarily arises, What temple is this, or what is meant by it? If we have not reached God's thought as to the millennial reign, and seen that there will then be a temple on earth which is the place of His throne, we shall scarcely realize the true position of this Gentile company. As risen saints, if we conceive them such, it will be difficult to imagine their relation to a temple on earth; but where are we shown that these are risen saints? Where are we shown that they have passed through death at all? Such things are constantly read into passages of this sort which do not contain them.

Take—what we cannot but realize to be a similar company at least—those who are assembled before the throne of the Son of man when He comes; when, as we are told, "the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 31-36). And of these it is said finally that the righteous go away "into life eternal." How constantly in this case also it is thought that we are looking at those raised in a general resurrection, and who as sheep or goats pass, as the result of this judgment, to heaven or to hell! But nothing is said about resurrection, or about heaven. The Son of man has set up His throne on earth; and that supposes, of necessity, discriminating judgment of the nations among whom His throne now is. The passage has been examined in its place, and there is no need to repeat what has been already said.

But here it is plain there is a throne, before which men stand; and yet it is a throne on earth, though a divine throne. It is not contended that the companies are necessarily the same; but any one who is familiar with the language of the Old Testament prophets will have little difficulty in realizing what is said here. Take Isaiah's description of Jerusalem in her blessing in millennial days (Isa. iv. 5, 6), when "the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." The language here carries us back, of course, to Israel in the wilderness when the glory *was* such a covering to them. But this is Jerusalem under the almighty wings which would so long since have covered her, but she would not, yet under which she has come at last to rest. Here, too, it is in conflict with the thoughts of many, and yet what Scripture absolutely assures us of, that there will be a temple once more, a literal holy place upon earth which God recognizes, and where He displays Himself; so that the very sign of the end of the decreed time of God's preparatory dwelling in Jerusalem will be, as Daniel tells us, "the anointing of the

<p>God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth upon the throne shall ²tabernacle over them. They shall ³hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun in any wise fall upon them</p>	<p><i>p</i> cf. Is. 4. 5, 6. <i>q</i> Is. 49. 10. Ps. 121. 6.</p>
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most holy" place (Dan. ix. 24). That which Israel has lost, and for so long lost, through their unbelief, shall be restored to them in a more wonderful manner than before; and thus it is, as we find further in Isaiah (chap. ii. 3, 4), "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." When this is to be, is absolutely plain from what follows this: "And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

That time surely is in the future yet. The reinstating of Israel in their land, converted to God and once more gathered, all of them, Judah united with Ephraim, and under One of whom God speaks by the prophet as "My servant David, their Prince forever," will show how little He has repented of His thoughts in connection with them. In the same explicit way does He speak in Ezek. xxxvii. 26-28: "Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forevermore." Thus it is the very sign of His acceptance of His people Israel, an acceptance which will know no change forever, that His sanctuary is explicitly in the midst of them. This, of course, is quite contrary to what we have in Christianity; but the difficulty with us has been the making of Christianity God's final thought as to the earth, as well as heaven, so as to make all these passages really unintelligible to us without such an interpretation of them as implies large modification also. Taken simply as they read, they are everywhere intelligible and most consistent, as God's words must always be. And the words of the prophets should surely make us understand better how the company that are before us here can be at once upon earth, and "before the throne of God," and "serve Him day and night in His temple," and how "He that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them."

But a difficulty may be found in another direction. These are, as is evident, a Gentile company. We have already distinguished them from those sealed of Israel in the previous vision. If Israel and the nations are thus apart, how could it be said of Gentiles here that they "serve Him day and night in His temple"? Do not the words show that there is, after all, an inconsistency in applying such language to a people upon earth, and when Israel's distinctive blessings have been restored to her? Now the prophet has already anticipated this very difficulty; for Isaiah assures us, speaking of the time of Israel's final restoration, when the Gentiles "shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord," that in that new condition, in testimony of His grace to all, *Gentiles* should also be admitted to a place of special nearness to Himself: "And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord" (Isa. lxvi. 20, 21). And here it is that the assurance follows, "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." Thus, while Israel has her

⁴ (viii. 1-5):
The seventh seal
removed,
initiating
the change
impending.

nor any burning heat; because the "Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall tend them, and shall lead them to 'fountains of waters of life, and God shall 'wipe away every tear from their eyes.

⁴ And when he opened the seventh seal, there was "silence in heaven about half an hour. And I saw

r ch. 14. 1.
Ps. 23. 1.
s Ps. 23. 2.
Ps. 36. 8.
cf. Ezek. 47. 1.
t Is. 25. 8.
ch. 21. 4.
u cfr. ch. 5.
9-14; cf. Ps. 9. 16.

distinctive place and blessing, at the same time God, in His own grace, will associate others with them from among the Gentiles themselves.

It has been said that the promise "I will take of them for priests and for Levites" merely refers to these Israelites brought back by the Gentiles to Jerusalem; but, as Delitsch well says, "God is here certainly not announcing so simple a thing as that the priests among the returned people should be still priests." He has just declared that the Gentiles "shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an offering to the Lord, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel unto the house of the Lord." The Gentiles are here, therefore, this clean vessel; and being thus cleansed, they have the further promise, "and of them also will I take for priests and Levites." It is plain, moreover, that such an application of Isaiah's words brings his prophecy and this passage before us into perfect harmony, and thus the connection, while at the same time the contrast with the former vision of Israel's 144,000, is preserved. The two together give us a complete picture of blessing for both Israel and the Gentiles—a bow of promise banding for them the storm through which they pass. Neither group is heavenly. Neither is the full number to be saved at that time; but they are, in the language of the fourteenth chapter, a sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest beyond, and in each case dedicated as this, in a peculiar manner, to the Lord.

The words that follow here do indeed speak of it as the entrance into a blessing which for them shall be eternal; but so, as to Israel even nationally, when thus finally restored, they are past all changes now. Past millennial times, of which the vision speaks, there may be indeed still for them blessing such as we have not here, but that does not affect the permanence of what is promised: "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun in any wise fall upon them, nor any burning heat; because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Let us remember, also, in this connection, that while it is the earthly aspect of things simply upon which the prophets of old dwell, there is always in the New Testament an additional heavenly side, and we can see in the vision before us an intimation of this—an opened heavens, as one would say, into which at least they gaze; in the presence of which they are; so that the Lord's words to Nathaniel come to mind, in which He whom Nathaniel's faith had just acknowledged as the Son of God and King of Israel, prophesies of greater things to those who believe in Him: "Verily, verily, I say to you, henceforth ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This, as the whole connection shows, has in view, not dwellers in heaven, but upon earth—those who, with Nathaniel's faith, will at last acknowledge the King of Israel, and who, in consequence of this, not, shall be in heaven, but "shall see heaven opened," and the angels of God attending upon Him who, wonderful to say, is a Son of man. Just such an opened heavens do we see in the vision before us.

⁴ The seventh seal is now loosed, and there is silence in heaven about half an hour: evidently a brief pause only, and quite unsuited to indicate the commencement of eternity. One cannot say that it corresponds either, of necessity, to any pause in events upon earth, although this might follow such a pause in heaven, for heaven is in full government, as we have seen, of the affairs upon

the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and much incense was given to him that he might add it to the prayers of all saints at the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense

v cf. Lk. 1. 19.
cf. Job. 1. 6
w cf. Joel 2.
1.
cf. Am. 3. 8.
x cf. Is. 63. 9.
cf. Am. 9. 1.
y cf. Is. 6. 6.
z cf. Heb. 7.
cf. Ps. 141. 2.

25; cf. Jno. 14. 13. a Ex. 30. 7;

earth. There is a more important reference to which Bishop Newton (after Philo) calls attention—that “while the sacrifices were made (2 Chron. xxix. 25-28), the voices, and instruments, and trumpets sounded.” “While the priest went into the temple to burn incense (Luke i. 9, 10) all was silent, and the people prayed to themselves.” Here we have immediately the prayers of the saints offered to God, with incense added to them by the angel-priest; and the prayers are answered in the sounding of the trumpets, which announce more distinctly than ever the judgments of God which are at hand upon a world that has rejected Christ, and still rejects His people. In this case the silence in heaven links the opening of the seal in a very direct way with that which follows; and it would be plain that we have not in the trumpets events which go on side by side with those that have already been before us in the seals, but a new and separate series of judgments: the catastrophe under the sixth seal being in this way still more distinctly seen as by no means the final break-up of earthly governments preparatory to the assumption of the throne on earth by Him to whom of right it belongs. On the other hand, all in the seals hitherto has been preparatory. They are the opening of the book, as on the face of it would be natural to say; and only at this point therefore is the book fully opened. The contents have yet to be made plain to us.

It is in accordance with this that the seventh seal is in some sense an eighth practically, that is, if we take the septenary series as they are numbered for us here. Divisions immediately preceding have given us what can neither be placed under the sixth nor under the seventh seal, but must form a division of its own. This, according to the structure, is the seventh division. The seventh seal is both a seventh and an eighth. We can neither disregard the number specifically attached to it, nor the actual separateness of the preceding visions. The seventh seal is this, as being that which completely opens the book. Seven is the number of completion, as we know, while as an eighth it speaks of a new beginning. The sixth seal is not final judgment, however anticipative of it it may be. The winds have not yet been allowed, as we see in the following vision, to burst forth, as they are about to. The brethren also of the martyrs under the fifth seal, who are to be slain as they were, have not yet given up their lives. In the meanwhile, because the seventh seal in opening the whole book brings us face to face with the most awful period of the world's history ever to be known, we are first taken apart from the succession of events, to see beforehand the gracious purposes which are hidden behind these coming judgments. The visions are an interruption, a parenthetical instruction, which, coming in the place it does, pushes, as it were, the seventh seal on to be an eighth section, itself filling the seventh place. Surely, if numbers have significance at all, we may read it here. The seventh place is filled by that which gives rest to the heart in the assurance of that which God's accomplished work must mean in the way of blessing—a sabbatism which no restless will of man, nor power of evil, can any more disturb.

The seventh seal at once leads us on to that which governs the whole course of things before us. The trumpets to sound are war-trumpets. They correspond to the similar compassing of Jericho seven times on the last day of its existence, and show us in detail that judgment of the world prefigured in the downfall and judgment of Jericho. The trumpets, we may remind ourselves, as they are given us in the Old Testament picture, are trumpets of jubilee.

went up with the prayers of the saints, out of the hand of the angel before God. And the angel took the censer, and ^bfilled it from the fire of the altar, and ^ccast it upon the earth: and ^dthere were voices, and thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake.

b cf. Lev. 16.
12.
c cf. Nu. 16.
46.
c cf. Matt.
21. 44.
cf. Rom.
8. 24, 25.

d ch. 4. 5; Ps. 97. 3, 4; *cf.* Ex. 19. 18, 19.

While, on the one hand, they give notes of alarm and judgment, yet it is the time of liberation and restoration that is coming in; and here we are given to see what it is that moves the Hand that moves the universe—that the trumpets sound as the answer of God to the supplications of the saints. We have heard these already under the fifth seal, and have had the assurance that they *were* to be answered. Now we see that all the judgments following are in answer to them. “I saw,” says the apostle, “the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them; and another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all saints at the golden altar which was before the throne.” The answer comes in the shape of fire from the altar cast upon the earth, when we hear immediately what characterizes all that follows: “there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.” The sacrifice of this altar, which is the altar of burnt-offering plainly, *has gone up from it*. There is no offering any more; and alas, the masses of men have only rejected the propitiation made. The fire of the altar therefore does not now consume the victim—it remains but an awful fire of wrath upon those for whom there remaineth no more any sacrifice for sin. They have, in fact, offered victims to God—whose blood they have poured out sacrilegiously beneath God’s altar. God has accepted such sacrifices on the part of His people, but they could work no atonement for the men that shed their blood. On the contrary, they plead, as we have seen, against their persecutors; and the wrath is now coming upon them to the uttermost.

Spite of all this, there is a point which is surely significant: that the Priest who puts the incense to the prayer of the saints is not the *human* priest whom we should expect. His form is angelic; and yet it is most certain that no angel besides is ever seen in such priestly attitude, and that Christ, in order “that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God,” had to be in all things made like unto His brethren (Heb. ii. 17). It is Christ, surely, who is before us as offering the prayers of the saints to God, and thus we can understand the incense which He can add to them, which is but indeed the fragrance of what He was Himself, and is, for God. But in this case it seems strange that He should be in angel-garb, not human: and this would speak naturally of a certain distance on His part, who is yet interceding. To interpret this, we have to realize the condition of those for whom He intercedes. They are, according to the uniform tenor of what is here, characteristically a Jewish remnant, a remnant chosen by grace out of an otherwise apostate people, and who themselves have to be passed through the refiner’s fire in order that they may at last come out the vessel that they are designed to be, for His use. Thus we can understand that they are not as yet in the full apprehension and enjoyment of what Christ is to them, as in after days they will be. Christ Himself is, in a certain sense, standing aloof. His manner, though not His heart, is strange. They cannot fail of ultimate blessing; but it is the time of Jacob’s trial, out of which indeed he is to be delivered. To use the figure with which the prophet connects this, it is their finding the bitter pangs of travail which are upon the nation, but out of which a new Israel shall be born, when Jacob shall become Israel, answering now fully to his God-given name.

Thus, as we may see, the book is now really opened. We have had before us the elements which make it up. The prophetic history of it all is now to come, but the character of things should be abundantly plain. The seals have been loosed, and the book is opened.

SUBD. 2.

We have now the trumpets, therefore, in successive, orderly course; it is the progress of a judgment which is yet to salvation, and by which the earth is to come into a new state of blessing such as has never yet been known. As already said, the trumpets are trumpets of jubilee, yet Jericho is to be destroyed. The fashion of the world, evil world as it has been, must pass away; and in no other manner can salvation for man at large be reached. The trumpets proclaim this aloud. If the seals show us mysteries that have to be penetrated, the trumpets speak plainly; and that, whether all their details may be clear to us or not.

Sec. 1.

Nevertheless, we come at first to what has been always found one of the most difficult parts of Revelation, and as to which thoughts of interpreters are perhaps the most diverse. The fact is that, as to these early trumpets, there is a significant hint given us which will in measure explain the mystery in which they are involved. This is found in the vision which follows the sixth trumpet, in the same way exactly as the visions of the seventh chapter follow the sixth seal. In this, we may well look for that which will cast light upon all that is before us. In the vision following the sixth trumpet we see, first of all, an angel descending out of heaven, who claims the sea and the land—the whole earth therefore—for God. It is no doubt once more Christ in angelic form, as that which is said of Him proves; but we need not pause upon this now: the great point for us at present is, that we are brought thus manifestly into connection, in a more decisive way than before, with God's purposes of blessing for the earth at large. For this, it must be manifestly His; and thus we are brought into connection also in a fuller way than before with the prophets who speak of this—with the prophets, therefore, of the Old Testament. As He comes down, the Angel has in His hand a little book, which, in contrast with that which was in Christ's hand before, is open now. It is a little book, in implied contrast with the other, just as its being open is in contrast with the sealing of the other, and the Angel Himself declares that now there is to be delay no longer, "but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, who is about to sound, the *mystery of God shall be completed, according to the good tidings which He declared by His servants the prophets.*" This ought to make us prepared for what we find is before us when the book has been taken by John—a vision of the temple of God and the holy city, but now trodden under foot of the Gentiles, yet a testimony of God preserved in it which is to last for a period which is the exact half of a week of years. We are, in short, in the last week of Daniel's seventy, as all that is connected with this shows, and thus manifestly also where is found the full light of prophetic testimony. The little book is the testimony of Israel's prophets—little just because it is confined to earth and the divine purposes as to it, and does not in any wise reach to the full compass of that which the New Testament has revealed to us.

But if this is found only at the end of the sixth trumpet, we shall easily understand that that which takes place before this, although in the same line of things, yet can be but introductory to what the prophets speak. We are left (apart, of course, from the general indications furnished by the prophetic testimony) to a kind of isolated interpretation, if we may so say, of the former part here, and therefore we need not wonder if we find difficulty in it. No doubt we are by no means altogether left to this. We have helps and assistances which we must not disregard. We shall find that the very succession of these trumpets, plainly given as it is, every one numbered, will be a help to us. There is a certain connection of them with one another which any right interpretation of them must bring out. Events do not merely follow one another, but more or less grow out of one another. They are a divine series, and not a mere bringing together of disconnected things.

Then again, we shall find, probably, that just here, where Israel's prophets

seem in measure to fail us, there comes to our help what mere Futurism indeed refuses, but which, nevertheless, has meaning and help for us in its place, namely, the historical interpretation of Revelation: if we make it the whole thing, it will certainly display its inadequacy; but in these trumpet-proclaimed judgments, especially under the fifth and sixth trumpets, it acquires a consistency which certainly speaks for its truthfulness. We must examine somewhat this historical interpretation at a future time, but nothing forbids us to call it to our help here if we should find, as we may, help in it. If God has given us in the history of the Church—as it would be folly to deny—what may very well seem but the echo of Israel's history, the parallelism which we shall thus find should be helpful to confirm the two interpretations here, which may well be expected to be parallel. At any rate, we must search for ourselves and see.

Now the general historic interpretation of the first four trumpets applies them to the breaking up of the Roman empire by the barbarian inroads of Goths, Vandals, and Huns, until its final extinction in the West by the hands of Odoacer. The eastern half survived to a later day, but it was henceforth Grecian rather than Roman; Rome itself, with all that constituted its greatness—nay, its being, in the days of its ancient glory—having departed from it. This application agrees with the unity of these trumpets, while it gives a sufficient reason for the series coming to an end; the fifth and sixth trumpets turning now to judgments upon the eastern half, by the hands of Saracen and Turk; and the seventh being universal in its character. The Roman empire, let us remember, as the last empire of Daniel's visions, and that which existed in the Lord's lifetime upon earth, and by the authority of which He was crucified, stands as the representative of the world-power in its rebellion against God. (Compare Ps. ii. with Acts. iv. 25-28.) No wonder, therefore, if its history should be given under these war-trumpets, the last of which gives us the full victory of Christ over all the opposition.

It is consistent with this that Satan, in the twelfth chapter of this book, should, as the dragon, be pictured with the seven heads and ten horns of the Roman beast. He is the spiritual "prince of this world," and in this way is clothed with the power of the world, which we see here again as Roman. So, again, the "earth" (which both in Greek and Hebrew may mean "land," and is often by no means the equivalent of the world) seems almost constantly in these prophecies, till the final one, to be the *Roman* earth, the territory of the Roman empire in its widest aspect, and of which the western part seems to be the "third part" mentioned in the trumpets. As to this "third part," Mr. Elliott urges that during the period of these early trumpets "the Roman world was in fact divided into three parts, namely, the eastern (Asia Minor, Syria, Arabia, Egypt); the central (Moesia, Greece, Illyricum, Rhœtia); the western (Italy, Gaul, Britain, Spain, Northwestern Africa); and that the third, or western part, was destroyed." Others would make the "third part" equivalent to the territory peculiar to the third beast of Daniel, or the Greek empire; but this seems certainly not the truth; for in this case, according to the historical interpretation, the end of the eastern empire must be found under the fourth trumpet, whereas the fifth trumpet goes back, before this, to introduce the Saracens.

Of all interpretations, that only seems consistent which applies the "third part" to the western part of the Roman earth; and in this way the term may have a further significance, as that part in which the Roman empire is yet to revive, as it will revive for judgment in the latter days—the "third" being very often connected in Scripture, as is well known, with the thought of resurrection.

The Roman empire has indeed long been extinct, both in the West and in the East, and it is of this very extinction that the historical interpretation of the trumpets speaks; yet the voice of prophecy clearly assures us that it must be existing at the time of the end, when, because of the words of the little horn, judgment comes down upon it (Dan. vii. 11). The nineteenth chapter of this

book unites with the book of Daniel in this testimony; for it is when the Lord appears that the beast is seen along with the kings of the earth, arrayed in opposition against Him. Thus it is plain that the Roman empire must be existent at the end. It has yet, therefore, to rise again; and in the thirteenth chapter we see it, in fact, rising out of the sea; while in the seventeenth, where the woman Babylon has her seat upon it, it is said, "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition" (ver. 8). So it is called "the beast that was, and is not, and shall come." Nothing can be much plainer than the fact that the Roman empire will revive again.

But not only so; it is also declared by the same sure Word that it will revive to be smitten again in one of its heads, and apparently to death, yet its wound is healed and it lives (chap. xiii. 3, 12, 14). It is after this that it becomes idolatrous, as Daniel has intimated that it will, and all the world wonders after it (vers. 3, 8, 12).

It is not yet the place to go fully into this, but so much is clear as enables us to see how the historical interpretation of these trumpets points, or may point, to a future fulfilment of them. One other thing which the book of Revelation notes will make more complete our means of interpretation.

The beast, as seen in Revelation, has seven heads, or kings; and these are successive rulers—or forms of rule—over the empire: for, says the angel, "five are fallen, one is, and another is yet to come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." The heads, then, in this primary view, are seven, but five had passed away—commentators quote them from Livy: the sixth, the imperial power, existed at that time: the seventh was wholly future, and, in contrast with the long continuance of the sixth, would continue only a short space.

But there is an eighth head; and the beast himself is this. The last statement has been supposed to mean that the head exercised the whole authority of the empire; but it would seem nothing strange for the head of empire to exercise imperial authority. Does it not rather mean that the beast that is seen all through these chapters is the beast of this eighth head?

But the seventh head, where does it come in? There are some things that would seem to give us help with regard to this: for the empire plainly collapsed under its sixth head, and the seventh could not be until the empire again existed. There are questions here which have to be settled with the historical interpretation; but in the meantime the course of the trumpets, confirmed by their historical interpretation also, would suggest that we have in them, and indeed from the commencement of the seals, the history of the seventh head. The rider upon the white horse, to whom a crown is given, may well be the person under whom the empire is at first re-established: and of such an one, Napoleon (though not, as some have thought, the seventh head himself) may be well the foreshadow. The sixth seal does not point to his overthrow: it is a wider, temporary convulsion which affects all classes—high and low together; and in the pause that follows, they would seem to recover themselves. The trumpets begin, however, at once to threaten overthrow. The very escape of the governing classes under the first trumpet seems to prepare the way for the outburst under the second, which is an eruption from beneath—fierce with passionate revolt; under the third, apostasy is added to this, casting off the restraint of divine government, soon to grow into the last and worst form of Christianity according to Satan—Antichrist: it is the opposition of deified humanity to incarnate Deity.

The result is, under the fourth trumpet, as it would appear, that the imperial power is smitten, the seventh head wounded to death, and with it the recently established empire overthrown beyond mere human power to revive again. But this brings in the help of one mightier than man—the awful power of Satan, working with an energy proportionate to the shortness of the time which is now

SUBDIVISION 2. (Chaps. viii. 6-xi. 18.)

The trumpets. The progress of judgment to salvation.

SECTION 1. (Chap. viii. 6-13.)

The empire under its seventh head.

1. (viii 6, 7):
First
trumpet.
A concord
of contra-
ries.

1. **AND** the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. And the first sounded, and there was hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

cf. ch. 6. 1.
cf. ch. 16. 2.
Ex. 9. 23,
24.
Ps. 18. 13.
cf. Ezek.
38. 22.
cf. Job 38.
22. 23.
g vers. 8, 10,
etc.
cf. Lk. 2. 1.

his. The beast arises out of the abyss; its deadly wound is healed; the dragon gives him his power and throne, and great authority; and all the world wonders and worships (chap. xiii. 2-4). Then indeed it is "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth!"

1. The first trumpet now sounds, and there is "hail and fire mingled with blood," and they are cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth is burnt up, and the third part of the trees, and all the green grass. We find in this what connects itself with one of the plagues of Egypt, and there is a reference in the prophets (Micah vii. 15) to some repetition of the plagues of Egypt in the last days: "As in the days of your coming forth out of the land of Egypt, will I show unto him marvelous things." The trumpets and vials, so similar as they are to one another, similarly speak also with regard to the judgments of the latter days. It is not necessary to believe, as we are sometimes assured we must, that these plagues in Revelation must have the same physical form that the plagues in Egypt had. We are intended to learn, no doubt, by the resemblance; and Egypt being, as we know, the type of the world out of which our salvation is, we can see again how these judgments are judgments upon the world in order to the deliverance of God's people out of it. But in the time of which we now are thinking, it is Israel that is God's people; and the relation that we have seen exists here, so far as it is a relation of type and antitype, would speak rather for a dissimilarity than complete likeness between them. The shadow differs from the substance, and we are led rather to expect the repetition of these Egyptian plagues in their symbolical meaning than literally. This does not lessen its importance for us.

We find the hail with fire, of the first trumpet, among these plagues of Egypt. Symbolically it is one of the most solemn figures of divine judgment which nature furnishes. In the eighteenth psalm it is found in solemn connection: "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice: hailstones and coals of fire." Electric discharges and hail are products of a common cause—a mass of heated air, saturated with vapor, rising to a higher level and meeting the check of a cold current. It is a concord of apparent contraries. Cold is the withdrawal of heat, as darkness is the absence of light; and light and heat, cold and darkness, are akin to one another. Cold stands with darkness for the withdrawal of God, as fire—which is both heat and light—for the glow of His presence; which, as against sin, is wrath. Both these things can therefore exist together. God's forsaking is in anger necessarily. Love with Him could not forsake; therefore if there be on His part withdrawal, this cannot be a mere cold turning away. There is with Him no apathy, no mere indifference; and thus the heat of His anger necessarily accompanies His withdrawal. With the hail and fire blood is mingled here—a token of violent death, which shows the deadly character of a visitation by which the third part of the earth, the third part of the trees, and all green grass, is burnt up. The earth is not the globe, but the prophetic earth; and this is practically the territory of Daniel's four empires.

2. (8, 9):
Second
trumpet.
Eruptive
violence
spreading
death.

2. And the ^asecond angel sounded, and as it were a great ^amountain burning with fire was cast into the ^asea, and the third part of the sea became ^ablood; and the third part of the ^acreatures which were in the sea which had life died; and the third part of the ^aships was destroyed.

h ch. 6.3, etc.
i cf. Jer. 51.
25.

cf. Is. 2. 2.
cf. Is. 57. 20.
cf. ch. 17. 15.

cf. Ex. 7. 19.
20.
ch. 11. 6.
cf. ch. 16.

4-6. i cf. 2 Chron. 20. 23; cf. ch. 6. 4. m cf. Ps. 48. 7.

The third part, as already said, would seem to refer to the revived Roman empire in that western portion, which was in fact what was essentially Roman, and which is what seems to be revived. There is no need to suppose, as many do, that the revival of the Roman empire necessarily infers the exact boundaries that it had of old. The empire may be the same empire without this, and in the last days the West and the East seem to be not merely in separation, but in decisive opposition to one another. It is this third part of the earth, then, that is visited in this way. By the language, it seems to affect especially the lower ranks of the people, though, as necessarily would be the case, many of the higher also, but rather in contradistinction to those in authority. They have not escaped, as we have seen, in the general convulsion under the sixth seal. Nay, the heavens fleeing away might seem to intimate that the very possibility of true government was departed. Yet this might be while the governments go on; and in what follows we find that they do go on, although never really recovering themselves. Under this trumpet now begins, as it would seem, what should really cause them to collapse. Everywhere prosperity is gone, as the burning of the grass may imply; while the trees, which speak of that more deeply rooted in the earth, and which has power to stand as it were alone, are less affected. It is noticeable how in Isaiah (chap. ii. 13, 14), in the day of the Lord, the judgment is said to be "upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up." Everywhere it is upon that which lifts itself up that the Lord's judgment is; and the loftiness of man is specially emphasized. But the sources of all prosperity are rather found among the lowest than among the highest: "The king himself is served by the field" (Eccl. v. 9); and thus this first judgment strikes really all that is stable.

2. But the second trumpet seems at first sight to be in a different line, while the symbolic meaning shows the real connection. "As it were, a great mountain burning with fire" is cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea becomes blood, and the third part of the living creatures in the sea die, and the third part of the ships are destroyed. A reference to Jeremiah may help us here. Of Babylon, Jehovah says, "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, which destroyest all the earth, and I will stretch out My hand upon thee and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain" (Jer. li. 25). The difference is plain, of course, as well as the similarity; but the comparison suggests to us here a power mighty, firmly seated and exalted, yet full of volcanic forces in conflict, by which not only her own bowels are torn out, but ruin is spread around. This cast into the sea (of the nations) already in commotion—as the sea implies—produces death and disaster beyond that of the preceding trumpet. Such a state of eruption we might see in France at the end of the eighteenth century, which may well illustrate what seems intended. There the fierce outburst of revolt against all forms of monarchy—the fruit of centuries of insolent tyranny under which men had been crushed—set Europe in convulsion. History is full of such portents of that which shall be, and we do well to take heed to them. Especially as the time of final judgment approaches, we may expect to find such pre-intimations of it; and thus there is a growth on to, and preparation for, that which at last takes those who have not received warning by it by surprise. The third part of the ships being destroyed would seem naturally to imply the destruction of commerce to this extent—the intercourse between the nations necessarily affected by the reign of terror around. Here let

3. (10, 11):
Third
trumpet.
A flaming
meteor
turns to
death the
sources of
of refresh-
ment.

3. And the "third angel sounded, and there fell out of heaven a great °star, burning as a lamp; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the "springs of waters. And the name of the star is called, Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became "wormwood; and many of the men "died of the waters because they were made bitter.

n ch.6.5.etc.
o cf. ch.9. 1.
cf. Is.14.12.
ctr. Dan.
12. 3.
p cf. ch. 16.4.
cf. 2 Cor. 2.
17.
ctr. ch. 22.
1,17.
q cf. Deut.

29. 18; cf. Jer. 23. 15; cf. Acts 8. 23. r cf. 2 Kl. 4. 39, 40; cf. 2 Tim. 2. 17, 18.

us notice that, mighty as the power may be, the eruption is from below, and how the distress amongst the lowest classes operates to produce it. Thus the two trumpets here connect together.

3. The third angel sounds, and there falls out of heaven a great star burning as a lamp, which, falling upon the third part of the rivers and springs of water, makes them poisonously bitter. The star is thus called Wormwood, or Absinthe, which is a bitter, intoxicating, and poisonous herb. The heavens are the sphere of government, whether civil or spiritual. A ruler of either kind might therefore be indicated here. The historical application is in general to Attila, king of the Huns. Yet the fall from heaven, the poisoning of the sources of refreshment, as well as the parallel, if not the deeper connection with the sixth trumpet, seem to point much more strongly to an apostate teacher by whose fall the springs of spiritual truth are embittered, causing men to perish. With all the misery that has hitherto been depicted as coming upon men under these Apocalyptic symbols, we have not before had any clear intimation of this, which we know, however, to be a principal ingredient in the full cup of bitterness which will then be meted out to men. Because they have not received "the love of the truth that they might be saved," God will send them "strong delusion that they may believe a lie." How much the warnings of this abound in the present day it is hardly needful to insist upon. False prophets of every kind are more and more showing themselves. In the French revolution, at the end of the eighteenth century, the revolt against existing governments linked itself with revolt against Christianity; and the social and anarchical movements which have followed, and indeed have largely sprung out of it, are uniformly allied with infidel and atheistic avowals as extreme as any of that time. We have already considered, in a measure, the doctrine of a personal antichrist yet to come, and we shall be repeatedly recalled to the consideration of it as we go on with the Revelation. Here it is only the place to say that his birthplace in this book seems to be under the third trumpet—though his descent more strictly than his rising. He is the fruit of apostasy, as the second epistle to the Thessalonians (chap. ii. 3) would lead us to anticipate, and the second chapter of John's first epistle no less.

The rivers and springs of water naturally speak of doctrine. The living water is the well known symbol of the Spirit of God; but, as acting through the Word, water becomes the symbol of this, as we find it in Eph. v. 26—"the washing of water by the Word." Here, that which should have been refreshment and blessing is distilled into poison; and what this bodes is easy to understand when we remember that if the Lord has now taken His true saints to heaven, the rest have become wholly distasteful to Him, and are to be spewed out of His mouth. Apostasy is the natural issue; and here again the premonitions of this are to be found on every side. Let us remember, also, that the casting off of divine government leads naturally to the casting off of human government as well; and here we find the connection with that which follows, although if merely human government is thrown off, that does not mean but that there may be, as in fact there will be, a form of government arising out of this chaos which will suit the purpose of the prince of this world better than anarchy itself. He can organize as well as merely destroy. He can vivify as well as slay, and we shall find that this is just what the course of things will show us here.

4. (12, 13):
The fourth
trumpet.
Fading
luminaries.

4. And the *fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the 'sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, so that the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for its "third part, and the night likewise. And I saw, and I heard one "eagle flying in mid heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to those that "dwell upon the earth, by reason of the rest of the trumpet-voices of the three angels which are about to sound.

s ch. 6.7, etc.

t cf. Joel 2.

31.

Is. 13. 10.

cf. Ex. 10.

21-23.

cf. Jno. 12.

35.

u ver. 7, etc.

cf. Ex. 10.

23.

v cf. Lk. 17.

37.

w ch. 9. 12.

ch. 11. 14. x cf. ch. 3. 10.

4. But now, under the fourth trumpet, a sign occurs which may be compared with that under the sixth seal; but which, in the comparison, reveals important differences. Then a convulsion affected, as it would appear, the whole earth. Now it is only the governing powers that are affected, and that not everywhere, but a third part of the sun, and of the moon, and of the stars, so that the day shines not "for a third part of it, and the night likewise." These last words, in connection with the similar limitation to the "third part" in the preceding trumpets, seems plain enough. It does not shine in the third part of the sphere of its dominion, nor the night (that is, in its moon and stars) either. Certainly this would not be the natural result of the darkening of the third part of the sun and moon; and this intimates to us, as all else does, that we have not here a literal phenomenon, but a figure of other things. Royal or imperial authority has collapsed, with its train of satellites, within such limits as the third part designates; and with this the first series of the trumpets ends. As ordinarily in these septenary series, the last three are cut off from the first four, which have a certain oneness of application, as also the use of this "third part," employed in them throughout, would imply; for the next trumpet has no intimation of this kind. The sixth has it again, but the seventh absolutely refuses all such limitation.

Here, then, as it would seem, we have the fall of the revived Roman empire in its seventh head. So far from there being any difficulty in the connection with what has preceded, it is throughout simple and consistent. There is perfect harmony with the prophecy elsewhere, as well as, so far as we can trace it, with the voice of prophecy in general—the prophecy, however, of the New Testament, rather than of the O.T. What we are looking at is the collapse of Christianity itself, as an earth-power, with all that with which politically it is connected. We go on to see evils much more intense which arise out of this, and in which the power of Satan over men is most amply demonstrated. Well may the voice of lamentation be heard here, even in that which is a denunciation of judgment. "I heard," says the apostle, "one eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to those that dwell upon the earth, by reason of the rest of the trumpet-voices of the three angels which are about to sound!"

The eagle, or vulture, is the symbol of judgment, for which the carcass, as the figure of corruption, calls; and thus the Lord's words in the Gospels, "Whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. xxiv. 28). Spite of the common application of this to the saints as rising to meet their coming Lord, there is an incongruousness in it which one feels ought to shock every Christian soul. Scripture never suggests such degrading parallels, and the Lord's words have a totally different connection. The lightning, coming from the east and shining even to the west, figures the storm and not the calm—the awful horror of judgment, and not the joy of gathering to Christ. All this part of the twenty-fourth chapter, to the end of the forty-second verse, is Jewish in its connection, and not Christian; and that which has misled so many in the parallel passage in Luke (xvii. 37), the connection with what we find in Matthew also, but in a more distant way,—where of two men in one bed,

1. (ix. 1-12):
Fifth
trumpet.
The law-
less head of
an uprising
law-
lessness.

SECTION 2. (Chaps. ix.-xi. 18.)

Alliance with the enemy.

1. And the "fifth angel sounded, and I saw a "star fallen from heaven unto the earth, and there was given unto him the key of the "pit of the abyss. And he opened

y ch 6 9, etc.
z cf. ch. 8. 10.
cf. ch. 12. 9
with Heb.
2. 14.
a ch. 20. 1-3.

the one is taken and the other left; two women grinding together at the mill, the one is taken and the other left,—all this is but in perfect harmony. Those taken are taken by the judgment, not to blessing. The earth is being cleared by judgment. Thus that which is corrupting upon it must be removed, and the illustration by the case of Noah and the generation of his day, when the flood came and took them all away, shows that the taking away is this. So in the parallel case of Lot: "In the day that Lot went forth from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all." But when the Lord takes away His people, destruction does not come upon them in any such manner. The confusion commonly made between the time of the Lord's taking His own away, and that of His coming with them to the judgment, is responsible for the whole distortion of the picture here.

Sec. 2.

In evil we may always expect a constant development. It is a kingdom, and the head of it is the great apostate, Satan himself. Thus if God only permit things to have their way, as He is doing now in that which is before us in the prophecy, we must expect that the picture will grow ever darker until the great consummation when the lightning of divine wrath will at last enlighten the whole and disperse it, and the day will at last come. What distinguishes the last three woes from what has gone before is the introduction, manifestly, of Satan himself into the scene. Christianity is that which, as light, holds in check the darkness as long as its power continues. We see, indeed, its manifest waning in the present day; but when the Church is removed, and, with the Church, the Spirit of God as dwelling in it is gone out of the scene, then the apostasy from Christianity will link itself more and more openly with the enemy of God and man. We have seen in the history of the churches themselves, as given in the seven epistles, a similar progress, although necessarily not as open; but now we come to the days in which the lawless one shall exalt himself against "all that is called God or that is worshiped," and his "coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders;" God allowing to be taken with a strong delusion those who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

1. Accordingly, when the fifth angel sounds, we see a star fallen from heaven to the earth, to whom is given the key of the pit of the abyss, and the pit of the abyss is opened. The star is not seen to fall, as under the third trumpet. It has already fallen; and we are necessarily referred back to the third trumpet for its previous history. It is the history of an apostate. To him is given the key of the abyss, and by his means there is opened upon the earth from the pit of the abyss a Satanic influence pictured as a smoke of a great furnace, so that the sun is darkened and the air, by the smoke of the pit. The abyss, or bottomless pit, is not hell itself; nor, according to Scripture, is Satan yet there. Yet the abyss is a "pit," often in the Old Testament the synonym for a *dungeon*, and everything shows it to have this meaning here; for it is a key by which alone it can be opened. The "pit of the abyss" is the "dungeon of the abyss,"—the dungeon which is that; an infinite deep from which nothing can recover itself, except by divine permission. So the demons pray that they may not be sent into "the deep," or "abyss" (Luke viii. 31); and Satan is, in the twentieth chapter, shut up there: but the distinction between that abyss and hell itself, which is the lake of fire, is manifest in what is said in that connection. In the Old Testament, parallel to this in Revelation, it is said: "They shall be gath-

the pit of the abyss; and there arose a ^bsmoke out of the pit as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun was darkened, and the air, by the smoke of the pit.

b cfr. ch. 21.
24.
cf. Joel 2.10.

ered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in prison" (Isa. xxiv. 22). Here the pit and the prison are synonymous. That it is not hell proper is seen again from the use of the word with regard to the Lord Himself (Rom. x. 7): "Who shall descend into the deep (abyss); that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead?" The connection of the pit with the state of the dead in the Old Testament is similar to that of the abyss here in the New; and the beast in its last phase is said to come up out of the abyss. Here, too, the death-state is indicated. It naturally refers to the wounding to death and revival of the beast, or of the seventh head (chap. xiii 3, 12, 14). Some have even contended, seeing the identification of the beast, or empire, with its last head (chap. xvii. 11), for the literal resurrection of a person in this case. But literal resurrection could only be from God, and the beast in its last form is filled and energized by Satan (chap. xiii. 1, 2). The coming out of the abyss, therefore, is figurative, as the beast itself is; and indeed the use of the word seems figurative throughout. Christ has "the keys of Hades and of Death" (chap. i. 18), and it is not to be imagined that He should give up into the hand of an apostate, whether man or spirit, any portion of His own authority. We must not think, therefore, as has been done, of a literal opening of Hades, and an eruption of the spirits of the lost upon the earth. The demons, it is urged, were, in heathen account, but "the spirits of mortals when separated from their earthly bodies;" and Josephus is cited for the orthodox Jewish opinion that "demons are none other than the spirits of the wicked dead. With very few exceptions, the Christian fathers were of like opinion, . . . and the burden of evidence and authority is to the effect that demons are the souls of dead men, particularly the spirits of those who bore a bad character in this life. There is no such thing known in the Bible as a good demon." This does not suit, however, with that which the Lord gives us from the mouth of the rich man in Hades, who is assured by Abraham of a great gulf fixed between the two classes there (Luke xvi. 26), "so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." This naturally intimates that, at least without distinct permission, the spirits of the dead would not be found upon earth. God might, of course, give permission, and it is said here that to the fallen star the key of the pit is "given;" this, no doubt, from God; for if Christ be the Master of the prison-house, none plainly could break bounds without His permission. The dead are by their death removed from the sphere of earth, and those shut up to await judgment can scarcely be thought of as at the same time taking active part in that which is done upon the earth. The thought of Satan being in hell and yet taking such part as it is confessed he does, naturally leads to the thought that with regard to the spirits of the dead there may be the same thing. But Satan is not in hell, as we have seen; nor, as yet, even in the abyss. And the days of men upon earth are ended when the earthly life is. Thus we read that it is for "deeds done in the body," and not out of it, that men are to give account in the day of judgment.

But we have to remember here, surely, that the whole language is symbolic. We are not called upon to believe that Christ literally puts the key of the prison-house into the hands of an apostate. The symbolism of the language here sets aside the whole moral question as to such a thing. Man certainly has the terrible power of yielding himself to the power of evil so as to open, not merely for himself, but for others also, the access to himself and others of that which lies otherwise under the restraint of God's judgment. At the time to which we are brought here this will be done, as we have seen, in a way such as has never been known as yet; but it is the abandonment to a lie of those that love a lie; and thus fittingly that which is said to rise out of the pit is but a smoke of darkness, by which everything, to the very sun itself, is darkened. Out of this

And out of the smoke came forth ^clocusts upon the earth, and there was given unto them authority* as the ^dscorpions of the earth have authority;* and it was said to them that they should not hurt the ^e'grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who have ^f'not the seal of God upon their foreheads; and it was given them that they should not kill these, but that they should be ^gtormented five months; and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. And in those days men shall ^h'seek death and shall in no wise find it, and shall long to die and death shall flee from them. And the likenesses of the locusts were like ⁱ'horses prepared for war; and on their heads were as it were ^j'crowns like gold, and their ^k'faces were as the faces of men, and they had ^l'hair as the hair of women, and their ^m'teeth were as those of lions, and they had ⁿ'breastplates, as it were iron breastplates; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of ^o'chariots of many horses running to the battle; and they have tails like scorpions, and stings;

c Ex. 10.12-15.
d cf. Nu. 21. 6.
e ctr. ch. 8. 7.
f ch. 7. 2, 3.
ctr. ch. 13. 16, 17.
g cf. Deut. 28. 67.
h cf. Jer. 8. 3.
i cf. Joel 2. 4.
j cf. Nah. 3. 17.
cf. ch. 16. 12.
k. cf. ch. 13. 18.
l cf. 1 Cor. 11. 14, 15.
m Joel 1. 6.
n ver. 17.
ctr. Eph. 6. 14.
o Joel 2. 5.
cf. Nah. 3. 2, 3.

* Or, "power."

smoke come locusts upon the earth, the evil bringing its own torment with it. It is not said that the locusts come directly out of the pit. It may be natural indeed to think that after all they cannot be bred of the smoke merely, but must have come out of the pit with this. But where the spiritual sense is the whole matter, naturalistic interpretations may easily deceive us. Recognizing that these are symbols, there is no difficulty. The smoke is not the smoke of torment, but the fumes of malign influences darkening men's minds. Out of this darkness we can easily understand such locusts as we have here to be bred. The symbolism, one would think, is manifest, and we can scarcely escape from it by saying that these are "supernatural, infernal, not earthly, locusts." It is quite in accordance with their origin that their power should be represented as that of the scorpions of the earth, that is, in their poisonous sting, the sting of malignant error; and their distinction from natural locusts is seen in this, that they do not touch the food of such, but are a plague only upon men, and these the unsealed men. Remembering that it is in Israel that this sealing has taken place, it seems to be clear that the unsealed ones too are Israelites, and that the sphere of this plague is in the East. They do not kill, as in general the scorpion does not, but inflict a torment to which death is preferable; and their power lasts five months. The death here is plainly not spiritual, but simple, natural death. Men long to die as their escape from torment, but death flees from them.

Next we find them pictured as warriors, a military power subordinated to what is their grand interest and aim, the propagation of poisonous falsehood. Thus the shapes of the locusts are like horses prepared to battle, and, as in the certainty of triumph beforehand, "upon their heads were, as it were, crowns like gold." Little matter of real triumph had they, as the limiting words here show. Their faces are as the faces of men. They have the dignity and apparent independence belonging to such. Nevertheless, their hair is as the hair of women, for they are in fullest subjection to the dark and dreadful power that rules over them. Their teeth as the teeth of lions shows the savage, tenacious grip with which they can hold their prey; their breastplates of iron, probably the fence of a hardened conscience. The sound of their wings like that of the locust-hosts they resemble, conveys the hopeless terror which they inspire.

and their authority* was in their tails to hurt men
five months. They have over them a king, the angel
 of the abyss: his name is in the Hebrew 'Abaddon,
 and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

The first woe is past. Behold, there come still *two
 woes after these things.

* Or, "power."

p ver. 5.
 q cf. Eph. 2.
 2.
 cf. Jno. 14.
 30.
 r cf. Job 26.
 6.
 cf. 1 Pet. 5.
 8.
 s ch. 8. 13.

Finally, as most important, we are again reminded of their scorpion stings and their power to hurt men five months. From this it has been urged that we have, in fact, to double the five months and make it ten; but the words themselves prohibit such a thought. The repetition is plainly for the sake of emphasis.

They have a king over them, the angel of the abyss, whose name is given (exactly the same in meaning) in Hebrew and in Greek. The use of the Hebrew joins with what we have seen before, to assure us that it is upon Israel that this woe comes; while the Greek no less plainly indicates that the angel here has also to do with the Gentiles. According to both, he is the "destroyer." It is natural to think of Satan in such connections; and Satan, we are reminded, is the inspirer of antichrist. The historical application in this case is one in which there is great unanimity among interpreters. They are applied to Mohammed and the Saracens, whose astonishing successes were manifestly gained under the inspiration of a false religion. They came in swarms from the very country of the locusts, and their turbaned heads with men's beards and women's hair, and their cuirasses, the sparing of the trees and corn, and even of life where there was submission, with their time of prevalence according to the year-day reckoning, 150 years—all these things have been pointed out as fulfilment of the vision. It has been objected, on the other hand, that such points as these are below the dignity of Scripture, and that the terms are moral. While this is surely true if we think of the full intention, it is to be considered, on the other hand, whether God does not allow and intend oftentimes a correspondence between such outward things and what is deeper, just as the face of a man may be a real index to his spirit; and *because* they are external they are well fitted to strike the imagination. The parable is, as we know, a very common method of instruction everywhere in Scripture. Thus God would open our eyes to what is indeed all around us; and to stop at what is external, or to ignore it, is alike an error. But in any case, and for reasons already considered, we cannot take this Saracenic scourge as any complete fulfilment of the locust vision; nor can we, on the other hand, connect it in full certainty with other prophecy, as would be necessary for very clear interpretation. What seems indicated, however, with regard to its final fulfilment in the time yet to come, is the rise and propagation of that desolation to which we know both the masses of mere Christian profession and of the unbelieving Jews will in the end surrender themselves. The antichrist of that time will be, there is little doubt, both an apostate from Christianity (2 Thess. ii.) and from the faith of his Jewish fathers (Dan. xi. 37); and his apostasy will remove, under divine permission, the present restraint upon the power of evil. It will be as if the abyss had opened its mouth to darken the light of heaven. A mist of confusion will roll in upon men's minds which, under Satanic influence, will soon find definite expression both in forms of blasphemy and a host of armed adherents ready to force upon others the doctrines of the pit. As has been said, it is apparently with Israel that this trumpet has to do; but to have the Greek name of the leader seems to speak also of the connection with Gentiles. If the application here made be the true one, then we know that the wicked one will not be a Jewish false Christian merely, but will also head the apostasy of Christendom. In this sense also it may be that the beast under its last head, the revived Roman empire, is said to come up out of the abyss, its actual revival being due to the dark and dreadful power

2. (ix. 13-21):
Sixth
trumpet.
The desolator.

2. And the 'sixth angel sounded, and I heard one voice out of the four horns of the "golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Loose the four angels that are "bound by the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, who were "prepared for the hour and day and month and year, to kill the "third part of men; and the number of the hosts of the horsemen was two "myriads of myriads: I heard the number of them. And thus I

t ch. 6. 12,
etc.
u cf. ch. 8. 3.
v cf. ch. 7. 1-3.
w cf. Jonah
1. 17.
x cf. ch. 8. 7.
y cf. Ju. 7. 12.

which is presented to us here, so exceeding in malignity all that has preceded it that its advent is called, in the language of inspiration, "the first woe."*

2. The sounding of the sixth trumpet is followed by a voice out of the horns of the golden altar which is before God. We recognize it at once as that which has furnished the incense added to the prayers of the saints by the Angel-Priest, and that we have here what is distinctly judgment upon the persecutors of the people of God. We have only to remember, also, that the idolatry in Israel in the last days is spoken of as "the abomination of desolation" (that is, the abomination which brings the desolator) to see an intimation of the connection between what has taken place under the fifth trumpet and what is here. In Dan. ix. 27 it is said literally, "And because of the wing of abominations there shall be a desolator." The wing of abominations is in contrast with that sheltering wing of the God of Israel under which the true remnant amongst them have learned to trust. The voice from the altar may remind us of one who has caused sacrifice and oblations to cease from the place whence it went up to God. The altar here is indeed the golden altar, not the altar of sacrifice itself; but the blood of the sacrifice had to be applied to the horns of the golden altar in order that incense might go up from it. It is more emphatic as read now: "one voice out of the four horns"—their united cry against the blasphemous invader. The cry is for judgment, to loose the four angels that are bound by the great river Euphrates.

The Euphrates was the boundary of the old Roman empire, and there the four angels are said to be bound—restrained, it may be, by the power of the empire itself, until, having risen up against God, their own hands throw down the barrier, and the hordes from without enter upon their mission to slay the third part of men: a term which we have seen as probably indicating the revived Roman empire. Here is the seat of the beast's supremacy, with which the power of Antichrist is found allied. When we turn to the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel to find the desolator of the last days (chap. xxxviii. 17), we find, in fact, the full array of nations from the other side of the Euphrates pouring in upon the land of Israel, while the connection of that land with Antichrist and with the Roman empire is plainly shown us in Daniel and in Revelation alike. If the Euphrates be the boundary of the empire, as it once really was, it is also Israel's as declared by God; and the two are already thus far identified. Their connection, spiritually and politically, we shall have fully before us in the more detailed prophecy to come.

* As to the duration of this woe, five months, little may be said beyond what is given in the text in connection with the historical interpretation. Five, however, is the number of human capacity and the limit of human responsibility; ten being but the twofold witness of this, manward and Godward, as seen in the Ten Commandments. The time of this intense persecution, then, will not be beyond the limits of human endurance, or, at least, beyond the measure of human responsibility. The fact, too, that men were not slain but only tormented would also indicate this. May we not also see a measure of mercy in this limitation of the time of this infliction? "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." It would almost seem as though God were yet calling upon men in this sore judgment to turn to Him. We see, indeed, that this is implied in the next plague (ver. 20), where men still refuse to repent.—S. R.

saw the horses in the vision, and those that sat upon them, having ^abreastplates of fire and jacinth and brimstone. And the heads of the horses were as the ^aheads of lions, and out of their mouths goeth fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three plagues were the third part of men killed: by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone ^bproceeding out of their mouths. For the authority ^{*} of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails: for their ^ctails were like serpents, having heads, and by them they hurt. And the rest of the men who were not slain in these plagues ^drepented not of the works of their hands, that they should not ^eworship the demons, and the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither ^fsee nor hear nor walk; and they repented not of their ^gmurders, nor of their ^hsorceries, nor of their ⁱfornications, nor of their ^jthefts.

z ver. 9.

a cf. Is. 5.29, 30.

b cf. Acts 9.

1.

c cf. Ps. 27. 2,

12.

c cf. Is. 9.15.

cf. Mi. 3. 5.

d cf. ch. 2.21.

e cf. ch. 16.9,

11.

e 1 Cor. 10.20.

Deut. 32.17.

f Ps. 115.4-7.

g cf. ch. 18.

24.

h cf. ch. 21.8.

i cf. ch. 18.9.

j cf. 1's. 50.

18.

* Or, "power."

But why *four* angels? and what do they symbolize? The restraint under which they were marks them sufficiently as opposing powers, and would exclude the thought of *holy* angels; nor is it probable that they are literal angels at all. They would seem representative powers, and in the historical application have been taken to refer to the fourfold division of the old Turkish empire into four kingdoms prior to the attack upon the empire of the East. If such an interpretation is to be made in reference to the final fulfilment, then it is noteworthy that "Gog of the land of Magog, Prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal,"—as the R. V., with most commentators, reads it now,—gives (under one head indeed) *four* separate powers as principal associates in this latter-day irruption. Others there are, but coming behind and apart, as in their train. This is at least a possible application, and therefore not unworthy of serious consideration; while it does not exclude a deeper and more penetrative meaning.

The angels are prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they might slay the third part of men. The immense host, 200,000,000 in number, are perfectly in the hand of a Master—time, work and limit carefully apportioned by eternal Wisdom, the evil in its fullest development servant to the good. The number is particularly emphasized: "I heard the number of them;" and yet it seems impossible to be literal except we take it, as some would do, as applying to angelic hosts, where, of course, all our reasoning is lost. The horses seem to be of chief importance, and are most dwelt upon, though their riders are first described, but only with regard to their "breastplates of fire and jacinth and brimstone." These answer to the "fire and smoke and brimstone" out of the horses' mouths; divine judgment, of which they are the instruments, making them thus invincible while their work is being done. The horses have heads like lions; destruction comes with an open front—the judgment of God: so that the human hands that direct it are of the less consequence; divine wrath is sure to find its executioners.

God's judgment is foremost in this infliction, but there is also Satan's power in it. In this there is no possible contradiction, as we know. The horses' tails are like serpents, and have heads; and with these they do hurt. Poisonous falsehood characterizes this time, when men are given up to believe a lie. Death, physical and spiritual, are in league together, and the destruction is terrible: but those that escape are not delivered from their sins, which, as we see, are in the main idolatrous worship, with things that naturally issue out of this. The genealogy of evil is as recorded in the first of Romans. The forsaking of

3 (x. 1-xi. 14): The filling up of Old Testament prophecy.

3. ¹ And I saw another strong ²angel descending out of heaven, ¹clothed with a cloud, and the ^mrainbow upon his head, and his ⁿface as the sun, and his ^ofeet as pillars of fire; and having in his hand a ^plittle book

k cf. ch. 8.3.
l cf. ch. 1.7.
m cf. Acts 1.9.
n cf. ch. 4.3.
o cf. Ezek. 1.28.

¹ (x.1-7): The divine claim upon the earth.

o cf. ch. 1.15. *p ctr.* ch. 5.1; *cf.* Ps. 40.7; *cf.* 2 Pet. 1.19-21.

God leads to all other wickedness, but here it is where His full truth has been rejected, and the consequences are so much the more terrible and disastrous.

3. It has been already noticed that the difficulty of interpretation with regard to the trumpets hitherto is the result of their lying so much outside the field of vision of Old Testament prophecy. We are now coming, however, to what is completely within that field, and in this way the little book in the angel's hand speaks: a book which is opened, not needing to be opened, comparatively small in its scope, as Old Testament prophecy, compared with the larger range of the book of Revelation itself, necessarily is. The visions that follow here are all the filling up of Old Testament outlines. This we shall see as we take them up in detail.

¹ We have already seen that in the trumpets, as in the seals, there is a gap filled up with a vision between the sixth and seventh, so as to make the seventh structurally an eighth section. This corresponds, moreover, to the meaning; for the seventh trumpet introduces the kingdom of Christ on earth, which, although the third and final woe on the dwellers on the earth, is, on the other hand, the beginning of a new condition, and an eternal one. With this octave a chord is struck which vibrates through the universe. The interposed vision is in both series, therefore a *seventh*, with a meaning corresponding to the number of perfection. At least so it is in the series in connection with the seals, and we may be sure that we shall find no failure in this case: failure in the book of God, even in the minutest point,—our Lord's "jot or tittle,"—is an impossibility. Nothing is more beautiful of its kind than the way in which all this prophetic history yields itself to the hand that works in all and controls all; and this is what the numbers speak of. Thank God, we know whose hand it is. But the vision of the trumpet-series is very unlike that of the seals, and its burden of sorrow differs indeed from that sweet inlet into beatific rest. We shall find, however, that it vindicates its position none the less. As in the work, so in the word of God, with a substantial unity there is yet a wonderful variety; never a mere repetition, which would imply that God had exhausted Himself. As you cannot find two leaves in a forest alike, so you cannot find two passages of Scripture that are just alike, when they are carefully and intelligently considered. The right use of parallel passages must take in the consideration of the diversity and unity alike.

In the vision before us there is first of all seen the descent of a strong angel from heaven. As yet no descent of this kind has been seen. In the corresponding vision in the seal series, an angel ascends from the east; but here he descends, and from heaven. A more positive, direct action of heaven upon the earth is implied, power acting, though not yet the great power under the seventh trumpet, when the kingdom of Christ is come. This being, apparently angelic, is yet "clothed with a cloud"—a veil about him, which would seem to indicate a mystery, either as to his person or his ways. It does not say "the cloud,"—what Israel saw as a sign of the presence of the Lord,—otherwise there could be no doubt as to who was here: yet in his actions presently he is revealed to faith as truly what the cloud intimates. It is Christ acting as Jehovah, though yet personally hidden, and in behalf of Israel, among whom the angel of Jehovah walked thus appareled. It is only the *cloud*; the brightness which is yet there has not shone forth. Faith has to penetrate the cloud to enter the Presence-chamber. Yet is He there, and in a form that intimates His remembrance of the covenant of old, and on His own part some correspondent action.

opened. And he placed his right foot upon the sea, and the left upon the land, and cried with a loud voice, as it were a lion roaring. And when he cried, the

q cf. Ps. 95. 5.
cf. Hag. 2. 6.
r cf. Joel 3.
16.
cf. Amos 3.
8.

So also the rainbow, which we last saw around the throne of God, encircles His head. Joy is coming after sorrow; refreshing after storm; the display of God's blessed attributes at last; though in that which passes, a glory which endureth. And this is coming nearer now in Him who descends to earth. But His face is as the sun; there indeed we see Him: who else has such a face? In our sky there are not two *suns*: our orbit is a circle, not an ellipse.

His face is above the cloud with which He is encircled. Heaven knows Him for what He is; the earth not yet, though on the earth may be those who are in heaven's secret. But His feet are like pillars of fire, and these are what are first in contact with the earth, the indication of ways which are in divine holiness; necessarily, therefore, in judgment; while the earth mutters and grows dark with rebellion.

Now we have what reveals to us whereto we have arrived: "And he had in his hand a little book opened." The seventh seal opens a book which had been seen in heaven; the seventh section here shows us another book now open, but, as noticed before, a *little* book. It has not the scope and fullness of the other. We hear nothing of how the writing fills up, and overflows the page. It is a little book which is open, until now shut up, but which is no longer shut up; a book, too, whose contents (evidently connected with the action of the angel here) have to do with the earth simply, not with heaven also, as the seven-sealed book has. We have in this what should surely lead us to what the book is; for the characteristic of Old Testament prophecy is just this, that it opens to us the earthly, not the heavenly things. Its promises are Israel's, the earthly people (Rom. ix. 4); and it deals fully with the millennial kingdom, and the convulsions which are its birth-throes. Beyond the Millennium, except in that brief reference of Peter's to the new heavens and earth, it does not go; and the new heavens are not the subject here, but the *earth*-heavens, the heavens of the second day, as Peter very distinctly shows. There is no heavenly city in prospect here. There is no rule over the earth on the part of Christ's co-heirs such as we have found in the song of Revelation. All this the Christian revelation adds to the Old Testament, while in the present book the Millennium is passed over with the briefest notice. Here, for the first time indeed, we get its limits set, and see how short it is, while the main thing dwelt upon as to it is, those with whom shall be filled the thrones which Daniel sees "placed," but sees not the occupants (Dan. vii. 9, R. V.). Thus it is plain how the book of Old Testament prophecy is, comparatively with the New, a little book. It is fully owned and maintained that, when we look with the aid of the New Testament beyond the letter, we can find more than this. Types there are, and shadows (and that everywhere in prophecy as well as history) of greater things. Earth itself and earthly things may be and are symbols of heaven and the heavenly. The summer reviving out of winter speaks of resurrection. The very food we feed on preaches life through death, and so more evidently the Old Testament: for Revelation, completing the cycle of the divine testimony, brings us back to paradise, as type of a better one; and the latest unfolding of what had been for ages hidden, shows us in Adam and his Eve, Christ and the Church.

But this manifestly leaves untouched the sense in which Old Testament prophecy may be styled a "little book." The application here is also easy. For in fact the Old Testament prophecy as to the earth has been for long a thing waiting for that fulfilment which shall manifest and illumine it. Israel, out-cast from her land, upon whom the blessing of the earth waits, all connected with this waits. We may see now, indeed, as in some measure we see their faces set once more toward their land, that other things also are ranging themselves preparatory to the final accomplishment. But yet the proper fulfilment of them is not really begun.

seven "thunders uttered their own voices. And when the seven thunders spake, I was about to write: and I heard a voice out of heaven saying, 'Seal up the things which the seven thunders spake, and write them not. And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth to the ages of ages, who "created the heaven and the things therein, and the earth and the things therein, and the sea and the things therein, that there should be "delay no longer; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the "mystery of God also shall be* completed according to the good tidings which he "declared by his own servants† the prophets.

s cf. Ps. 29.
3-9.

t cf. Dan. 8.
26.

cf. Dan. 12.
4, 9.

ctr. ch. 22.
10.

cf. Ps. 81.7.

u ch. 4. 11.
Gen. 1. 1.

v *cf.* ch. 1. 3.
cf. 2 Pet. 3.
9, 10.

w ch. 11. 15.
cf. Eph. 3.
3-10.

x *cf.* 1 Pet. 1.
11, 12.

cf. Lk. 1.70,
71.

* Literally, "has been completed." † "Bond-servants."

In the meanwhile, though the Lord is fulfilling His purposes of grace, and taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name, as to the earth it is "man's day" (1 Cor. iv. 3, marg.). When He shall have completed this, and gathered the heavenly saints to heaven, He shall put forth His hand in order to bring in the blessing for the earth; then the day of the *Lord* will begin in necessary judgment, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness. This day of the Lord begins, therefore, before the *appearing* of the Lord for which it prepares the way. The dawn of day is before the sunrise.

The apostle, in warning the Thessalonians against the error of supposing that the day of the Lord was come (2 Thess. ii. 2), gives them what would be a sign immediately preceding it. "For that day," he says, "shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The manifestation of the man of sin is therefore the bell that tolls in solemnly the day of the Lord. This would seem to be the opening, then, of the little book. Thenceforth the prophecies of the latter day become clear and intelligible. Now the apostasy has been shown, as it would seem, in its beginning, under the fifth trumpet, and the man of sin may well be the one spoken of there. Thus the little book may be fittingly now seen as opened; and in the continuation of the vision here we find for the first time the "beast," Daniel's "wild beast," in full activity (chap. xi. 7). All, therefore, seems connected and harmonious, and we are emerging out of the obscure border-land of prophecy into the place where the concentrated rays of its lamp are found.

We see, too, how rapidly the end draws near: "And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; and he cried with a great voice, as when a lion roareth." It is the preparatory voice of Judah's Lion as "suddenly His anger kindles;" and the seven thunders—the full, divine voice—the whole government of God in action—answers it; but what they utter has to find its interpretation at a later time.

Meanwhile the attitude of the angel is explained: "And the angel which I saw standing upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore by Him that liveth to the ages of ages, who created the heavens and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound,"—when he shall sound as he is about to do,— "then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which He hath declared by His servants the prophets."

All is of a piece here: the prophetic testimony (the testimony of the little

² (8-11):
Prophecy-
ing again.
The
little open
book.

² And the ^vvoice which I heard from heaven [was] again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the little book which is opened in the hand of the angel who is standing upon the sea and upon the land. And I went to the angel, saying to him, Give me the little book. And he saith unto me, "Take and eat it up: and it will make thy belly ^abitter, but in thy mouth it will be as ^bsweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the hand of the angel, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth as honey, sweet; and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And it was said unto me, Thou must ^cprophecy again of peoples and nations and tongues and many kings.

v cf. ch. 4. 1.

z cf. Ezek. 2. 8, 9.
cf. Ezek. 3. 1-3.
cf. Jer. 15. 16.
a cf. Jer. 15. 10.
cf. Jer. 20. 14-18.
b cf. Ps. 19. 10.
cf. Ps. 119. 103.
c cf. Jer. 25. 15-26.

open book) is now to be suddenly consummated, which ends only with the glories of Christ's reign over the earth. Amid all the confusion and evil of days so full of tribulation that except they were mercifully shortened no flesh should be saved, yet faith will be allowed to reckon the very days of its continuance, which in both Daniel and Revelation are exactly numbered. How great the relief in that day of distress, and how sweet the compassion of God that has provided it after this manner! "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved"—shall find deliverance speedy and effectual, and find it in the coming of that Son of man whose very title is a gospel of peace, and whose hand will accomplish the deliverance. There has been an apparent long delay. "There shall be delay no longer." Man's day has run to its end; and though in cloud and tempest, the day of the Lord at last is dawning. Then the mystery of God is finished—the mystery of the first prophecy of the woman's Seed, and in which the whole conflict between good and evil is summarized and foretold. What a mystery it has been, and how unbelief even in believers has stumbled over the delay! The heel of the Deliverer bruised: a victory of patient suffering to precede and insure the final victory of power! Meantime the persistence and apparent triumph of evil, by which are disciplined the heirs of glory! Now all is indeed at last cleared up; the mystery of God (needful to be a mystery while patience wrought its perfect work) is forever finished: the glory of God shines like the sun: faith is completely justified, the murmur of doubt forever silenced.

² Thus the sea and the land already, even while the days of trouble last, know the step of the divine angel, claiming earth and sea for Christ. And now faith (as in the prophet) is to devour the book of these wondrous communications, sweet in the mouth, yet at present bitter in digestion, for the last throes of the earth's travail are upon her. By and by this trouble will be no more remembered for the joy that the birth of a new day is come, a day prophesied of by so many voices without God, but a day which can only come when *God* shall wipe away the tears from off all faces. And it comes; it comes quickly now: the voice heard by the true Philadelphian is, "I come quickly."

The prophet begins here, therefore, what is a repetition in part of what has been already communicated by the prophets of old. He has to "prophecy again of peoples and nations and tongues and many kings." He is giving us thus, with additions certainly, what is contained in the Old Testament prophets. He is giving us the little open book.

³ We are coming now, therefore, to the contents of the little book; and, as the numerical structure would show us here, we see how the sanctuary-worshippers are set apart to God. It is Israel's sanctuary, of course, that is contemplated—one which has been long lying empty, and which in the days before its re-anoointing becomes the sign of the most open defiance of God that has ever been witnessed upon the earth, and that can be witnessed but once. The enemy is in the sanctuary, and idolatry there rears its head in the place of the name of the

³ (x1.1-14):
The sanctuary wor-
shippers set
apart to
God.

a (1,2): The
election of
grace all
for God.

³ *a* And there was given unto me a ^areed like a ^estaff, saying, Rise and ^vmeasure the temple* of God, and the altar, and those that worship therein. And the ^gcourt which is outside of the temple cast out and measure it not, because it is given to the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they ^btread under foot ⁴forty and two months.

* *ναος*, the sanctuary itself.

24; cf. Ps. 79. 1. *i* ch. 12. 6; ch. 13. 5.

d Ezek. 40.
3.
Zech. 2. 1.
ch. 21. 15.
e cf. Ps. 23.4.
f cf. Jer. 7.1-4.
g cf. Ezek. 8.
5-9.
cf. Ezek. 40.
17, etc.
h cf. Lk. 21.

God of Israel. Through this distress it is, nevertheless, that God forms and educates a people for Himself: and these pains are the throes of travail by which at length (and, as it might seem, "in a day) a nation is born." Israel's new nation, new in spirit, has never as yet been seen. We have here God's witness among them, by which the separation of the remnant is accomplished, which remnant, through the purgation of the judgment coming on, becomes the nation.

a The remembrance that we have before us now, that which carries us back to those prophecies of Daniel with which we should now be sufficiently familiar, guides at once as to the interpretation of what is before us. The mention of the "beast," and of the precise period of forty-two months or 1260 days, that is the half-week of his last or seventieth week previous to the coming in of blessing for Israel to the earth, is by itself conclusive. This week we have seen to be, in fact, divided by the taking away of the daily sacrifice in the midst of it (Dan. ix. 27). It is by the direct opposition to God involved in this that the man of sin is revealed. Hence it would seem clear that it is with the last half-week that we have here to do.

A reed like a staff is now given to the prophet that he may measure with it the temple of God. In a sense, no doubt, this is symbolical; that is, that the "temple" stands for its worshipers. We are not to think literally of the temple; and yet a purely symbolical interpretation, which would make us understand, for instance, the Church as the temple of God, would lead us, as is evident, far away from the truth. God measures the temple in token of His care of it. A reed like a staff is given to the prophet, that he may do this. If a reed suggests weakness (as all that is of God lies, at the time contemplated, under such a reproach), the words "like a staff" suggest the opposite of it. God's care for His people implied in this measurement is to unbelief indeed a mystery, for they seem exposed to the vicissitudes of other men; yet is it a staff upon which one may lean with fullest confidence. His measurement of things abides, perfect righteousness and absolute truth abiding necessarily as such. The temple is therefore, of course, the Jewish temple; not literal, but standing for Jewish worship and not Christian. Christian worship is over upon earth, and God is owning a people worshiping once more in connection with a temple, as of old. The altar as distinct from the temple proper would seem to be the altar of burnt-offering, upon which indeed for Israel all depended. It was there, too, God met with the people (Ex. xxix. 43), although, as we contemplate things here, the mass of the nation is in rejection, the court given up to the Gentiles, the holy city to be trodden under foot by them, only a remnant of true worshipers acknowledged for whom the altar still avails. A literal rendering of things here would seem only to create the most perfect confusion. While God is owning the remnant of His people at this time, their sanctuary is yet being trodden under foot along with the holy city. Temple and altar can only thus represent the true worshipers connected with these, whom God preserves. "The holy city" can speak of but one city on earth; nor can there be justifiable doubts as to the place in prophecy of this half-week of desolation. The mixture of literal and figurative language will be no cause of stumbling to any one who has carefully considered the style of all these apocalyptic visions, which are evidently not intended to carry their significance upon their faces. All must be fully

b (3-6): The witnesses.

b And I will give unto my two witnesses, that they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands, which stand before the Lord of the earth. And if any one will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any one will hurt them, he must in this way be killed. These have authority to shut

cf. Is. 43. 10, 12. *cf.* Is. 44. 8. *cf.* ver. 2. *cf.* Dan. 9. 27. *cf.* Zech. 4. 2, 3, 11, 14. *cf.* Jer. 11. 16. *cf.* Hos. 14. 6. *cf.* Ps. 52. 8. *cf.* Jas. 5. 17.

weighed, must be self-consistent, and fitting in its place, in connection with the whole prophetic plan. Thus alone can we have clearness and certainty as to interpretation.

As a man, then, who has been sunk in a long dream of sorrow, but to whom is now brought inspiring news of a joy in which he is called to have an active part, the prophet is here bidden to rise and measure the temple of God. How speedy and thorough a relief when God is brought into the scene—and from what scene is He really absent? How animating, how courageous a thing, then, is the faith that recognizes Him!

b But where God is, there must be a testimony to Him. We find it, therefore, immediately in this case. "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand, two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks which stand before the Lord of the whole earth."

The reference here is plainly to Zech. (chap. iv.); but there are also differences which are as plain. There the thing itself is accomplished to which here there is but testimony; and in humiliation, though there is power to maintain it, spite of all opposition, till the time appointed. The witnesses are identified with their testimony, that to which they bear witness. Hence the resemblance. They stand before the Lord of the earth, the One to whom the earth belongs, to maintain His claim upon it; in sackcloth, because this claim is resisted; a sufficient testimony in the power of the Spirit, a spiritual light amidst the darkness, which does not banish the darkness. "And if any man desire to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have power to shut the heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they will." Here is certainly not the grace of Christianity, but the ministry of power after the manner of Elijah and of Moses, judgment which must come because grace has been ineffectual, and of which the issue shall be in blessing for more than Israel themselves. The association of Elijah with Moses, which is evident here, of necessity reminds us of their association also on the mount of transfiguration, wherein, as a picture, was presented "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. i. 16-18). They are here in the same place of attendance upon their coming Lord. It does not follow, however, that they are personally present, as some have thought, and that the one has had preserved to him, while the other has had restored to him, his mortal body for that purpose! The preservation to Elijah of a mortal body in heaven seems a thought weird and unscriptural enough, with all its necessary suggestions also; but the closing prophecy of the Old Testament does announce the sending of Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. That is the day that is before us here; and is not this proof that Elijah himself must come? Naturally one would say so, but our Lord's words as to John the Baptist, on the other hand, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come," raise question. It has been answered that his own words deny that he was really Elias, and that Israel did not receive him; and so John could not be Elias to them. Both things are true, and yet do not seem satisfactory as

c (7-14):
Their
death and
resurrec-
tion.

heaven, that no rain fall during the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to °turn them to blood, and to °smite the earth with every plague as often as they will.

c And when they shall have accomplished their testimony, the °beast* that cometh up out of the abyss shall make °war upon them, and shall conquer them, and kill them; and their bodies † [shall be] upon the street of the great city, which °spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was °crucified. And they of the peoples and tribes and tongues

o cf. Ex. 7.19.
p cf. Ex. chs.
7-10.

q cf. ch. 13.1.
cf. ch. 17.8.
r cf. Dan. 7.
21.
cf. Matt. 10.
17-22.
s cf. Is. 1.10.
cf. Ezek. 16.
46.
t cf. Lk. 9.51.

* θηρίον has the force of a wild or ferocious beast. † Literally, "body."

argument. That he was not Elias literally only shows, or seems to show, that one who was not Elias *could*, under certain conditions, have fulfilled the prediction; while other words of the Lord, "I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed," show even more strongly that, for that day and generation, he *was* Elias. Why, then, could not another come, and in his spirit and power fulfil the prophecy in the future day? This, Revelation seems to confirm, inasmuch as it speaks of two witnesses who are both marked as possessing the spirit and power of Elias, and who stand on an equal footing as witnesses for God. Had it been one figure before the eyes here, it would have been more natural to say that it was Elias himself who was here, but there are two doing his work; nor can we think of a possible third behind and unnoticed, and yet the real instrument of God in this crisis. The two *form* this Elias ministry, which is to recall the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the children to the fathers, and who both lay down their lives as the seal of their testimony. Put all this together, and does it not seem as if Elias appeared in others raised up of God and endued with his spirit to complete the work for which he was raised up in Israel? Much more would all this hinder the thought of any personal appearance of Moses, while there is no prediction at all of any such thing. Jude's words (which have been adduced) as to the contention of Michael with Satan as to the body of the lawgiver, may well refer to the fact that the Lord had buried him and no man knew of his sepulchre. Satan may well for his own purposes have desired to make known his grave, just as God in His wisdom chose to hide it. Yet the appearance of Moses and Elias in connection with the appearing of the Lord as seen on the mount of transfiguration, seems none the less to connect itself with these two witnesses and their work—both caught away in like manner into "the cloud," as verse twelve really reads. And Malachi, just before the declaration of the mission of Elijah, bids them on God's part "remember the law of Moses My servant." Moses must do his work as well as Elias, for it is upon their turning in heart to the law of Moses that their blessing in the last days depends; and thus we find the power of God acting in their behalf in the likeness of what He wrought upon Egypt. The witnesses "have power over waters to turn them to blood." It is not that Moses is personally among them, but that Moses is in this way witnessing for them; and so the vials after this emphatically declare.*

c God thus during the whole time of trouble and apostasy preserves a testimony for Himself, until at the close that final outrage is permitted which brings down speedy judgment; for "when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them and overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall be upon the street of the great city which spiritually is called 'Sodom' and 'Egypt;' where also their Lord was crucified." If the 1260 days of prophetic testimony agree with the last half

* Doubtless this, as we have already seen in the second trumpet, is to be interpreted symbolically.—S. R.

and nations shall *look upon their dead bodies* three days and a half, and shall not suffer their bodies to be put into a sepulchre. And they that dwell upon the earth *rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those that dwell upon the earth. And after

u ctr. Is. 66.
24.

v cf. Ps. 79.
2-4.
cf. Jno. 16.
20.
cf. 1 Ki. 21.
15, 16.

* Literally, "body."

of the closing week of Daniel, they coincide with the time of the beast's permitted power, and the death of the witnesses is his last political act. That a certain interval of time should follow before his judgment, which takes place under the *third* and not the *second* woe, does not seem to conflict with chap. xiii. 5, where it should read, "Power was given to him to *practise*"—not "continue"—"forty and two months." The last act of tyranny may have been perpetrated in the slaying of the witnesses; and indeed it seems a thing fitted to be the close of power of this kind permitted him. With this the storm-cloud of judgment arises which smites him down shortly after.

If the duration of the testimony were supposed to be for the first half of the week, then the power of the beast would begin with the slaughter of the witnesses, and the three and a half years' tribulation *follow*; which does not seem to consist with the judgment and its effects, three and a half days afterwards.

Then, too, "the second woe is past" (ver. 14), and the third announces the kingdom of Christ as having come. It seems plain, therefore, that divine power maintains the testimony of the witnesses in spite of the reign of terror during the beast's usurpation, and that only at the end is it permitted to be, according to appearance, extinguished utterly. It is the time of the apparently perfect triumph of evil, and thus the dwellers upon the earth rejoice over them and make merry, because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt upon the earth. Here, then, for the first time, the beast out of the abyss comes plainly into the scene. In Daniel and in Rev. xiii. he does not come out of the *abyss*, but out of the *sea*; but in the seventeenth chapter he is spoken of as "about to come up out of the abyss;" showing undeniably that it is the same "beast" as Daniel's fourth one—the Roman empire. In the first case, as coming out of the sea, it has a common origin with the other three empires,—the Babylonian, Persian, and Grecian,—out of the heaving deep of Gentile nations. Then we find in Revelation what from Daniel we should never have expected, but what, in fact, has certainly taken place—that the empire which is to meet its judgment at the coming of the Lord does not continue uninterruptedly in power till then. There is a time in which it ceases to be, (and we can measure this time of non-existence already by centuries) after which it comes back in a peculiar form, as from the dead: "the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present" (chap. xvii. 8). This rising again into existence we would naturally take as its coming up out of the abyss, out of the death-state, and think that we were at the bottom of the whole matter. The truth seems to be not quite so simple, but here is not the place to go into it further. For the present it is enough to say that the coming up out of the abyss is, in fact, a revival out of the death-state, but, as a comparison with the fifth trumpet may suggest, revival by the dark and demon-influences which are there represented as in attendance upon the angel of the abyss. It is the one in whom is vested the power of the revived empire who concentrates the energy of his hatred against God in the slaying of the witnesses.

The place of their death is clearly Jerusalem: "Their dead bodies lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called 'Sodom' and 'Egypt,' *where also their Lord was crucified.*" Certainly no other place could be so defined: and thus defined and characterized for its lusts as Sodom, for its cruelty to the people of God as Egypt, it is not now called the "holy," but the "great" city—great

the "three days and a half [the] spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great "fear fell upon all that beheld them. And they * heard a great voice out of heaven saying to them, "Come up hither; and they went up to heaven in the "cloud, and their enemies "beheld them. And in that hour there came a great "earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and there was slain in the earthquake seven thousand "names of men. And the rest became "afraid, and gave "glory to the God of heaven. The 'second woe is passed; behold the third woe cometh quickly.

w ver. 9.

x cf. Acts 5. 11.

y cf. ch. 20. 4-6.

z cf. Acts 1. 9.

cf. 2Ki 2. 11.

a ctr. ver. 9.

b cf. ch. 6. 12.

cf. ch. 16. 18, 19.

c ctr. ch. 3. 4.

d ver. 11.

e ctr. ch. 16. 9.

f ch. 8. 13.

ch. 9. 12.

* Some of the earliest MSS. have, "I heard."

even in its crimes. In its street their bodies lie, exposed by the malice of their foes which denies them burial, but allowed by God as the open indictment of those who have thus definitively rejected His righteous rule. The race of the prophets is at an end, which has tormented them with their claim of the world for God, and the men of the earth rejoice and send gifts to one another. Little do they understand that, *when* His testimony is at an end, there is nothing left but for God Himself to come in, and to manifest a power before which man's power will be extinguished as flax before the flame.

And the presage of this quickly follows. "After the three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which beheld them, and they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them." *

If this is the time of the addition of the saints martyred under the beast's persecution to the first resurrection, of which the vision in the twentieth chapter speaks, then it is plain that we are arrived at the end of the beast's power against the saints, and of the last week of Daniel. Two is the number of valid testimony, and these two witnesses may, in a vision like that before us, stand for many more, nay, for the whole martyred remnant in Israel. We cannot say it is so, but we can as little say it is *not* so; but even the suggestion has its interest: for this appendix to the sixth trumpet seems designed to put in place the various features of Daniel's last week, the details of which are opened out to us in the seven chapters following, with many additions. And this we might expect in the connected chain of prophecy which stretches on to the end: for under the seventh trumpet the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ, and "the time of the dead to be judged" is at least contemplated.

The resurrection of the witnesses is not all: a great earthquake follows, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake 7,000 persons—"names of men," as it is put here (significantly enough in a history of doom for those who are asserting their greatness upon the earth); "and the rest were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven."

Thus the sixth trumpet ends in a convulsion in which judgment takes, as it were, the refused tithes from a rebellious people. There is a marked similarity here between the trumpets and the vials, which end also in an earthquake and judgment of the great city, as to which we may see further in its place. The rest that are not slain give glory to the God of heaven. It is the unacceptable product of mere human fear, which has no practical result; for God is claim-

* "The triumphing of the wicked is short." This seems suggested by the brief period of dishonor permitted to these witnesses. The correspondence with the three *years* and a half of the great tribulation is suggestive. Evil has but that brief period to assert itself, but in reality its real triumph shrivels up into *days*.—S. R.

4 (x1.15-18):
Seventh
trumpet.
The world-
kingdom of
the Lord.

4. And the ⁹seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The ^hworld-kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ has come, and he shall ¹reign unto the ages of ages. And the twenty-four ¹elders, who sit upon their thrones before God, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give thee thanks, Lord God Almighty, ²who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power, and reigned. And the ¹nations were angry, and thy ^mwrath came, and the time of the ^adead to be judged, and to give ⁹reward to thy ^servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to those that fear thy name, small and great, and to ²destroy those that destroy the earth.

g ch. 9. 13.
ch. 10. 7.
h ch. 12. 10.
cf. 1 Cor. 15.
24, 25.
i cf. Lk. 1. 33.
cf. ch. 22. 5.
j ch. 4. 4.
k cf. ch. 1. 4,
8.
l cf. Ps 2. 1, 2.
m cf. Ps 2. 5,
12.
cf. ch. 6. 16,
17.
cf. Ps. 110. 5.
n cf. ch. 20.
12-15.
cf. 2 Tim. 4.
1.
o cf. 1 Cor. 4.
1.

5; cf. 2 Cor. 5. 10. p cf. 1 Cor. 3. 17; cf. ch. 13. 10.

ing the earth, not simply heaven, and for the affirmation of this claim His witnesses have died. They can allow Him heaven who deny Him earth. And judgment takes its course. The second woe ends with this, and the third comes quickly afterward.

4. The third woe is the coming of the kingdom! Yes; that to greet which the earth breaks out in gladness, the morning without clouds, the day which has no night, and the fulfilment of the first promise which fell upon man's ears when he stood a naked sinner before God to hear his doom, the constant theme of prophecy—now swelling into song and now sighed out in prayer—that kingdom is yet, to the “dwellers upon earth,” the last and deepest woe!

The rod of iron is now to smite, and Omnipotence it is that wields it. The seventh angel sounds, and there follow great voices in heaven, saying, “The world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ has come, and He shall reign to the ages of ages.”

Few words and concise, but how pregnant with blessed meaning! The earth that has rolled from its orbit is reclaimed. Judgment has returned to righteousness. He who has learnt for Himself the path of obedience in a suffering which was the fruit of tender interest in man, has now Himself the sceptre; nor is there any power that can take it out of His hand.

There are no details yet; simply the announcement, which the elders in heaven answer with adoration, prostrate upon their faces, saying, “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God the Almighty, who art and who wast, that Thou hast taken Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give reward to Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and those that fear Thy name, small and great; and to destroy those that destroy the earth.”

There is nothing difficult here in the way of interpretation, except that “the time of the dead to be judged” seems to connect with the period of earthly judgments which introduce millennial blessing. It does not take place just then, as the twentieth chapter gives full proof. The explanation is that we have here the setting up of the kingdom in its full results, and that the order is one of *thought*, and not of *time*. The judgments of the quick (or living) and of the dead are both implied in the reign of our Lord and His Christ, though they are not executed together. God's wrath is mentioned first because it is, for the earth, the pre-requisite of blessing, and because judgment is not what He rests in, but in His love. It is therefore put first, that the realization of the blessing may come after, and not give place to it. But this wrath of God which meets and quells the nations' wrath, goes on and necessitates the judgment of the dead also. Death is no escape from it. The coming One has the keys of death and hades.

With this the holiness of God is satisfied, and the love in which He rests is free

1 (xl. 19-xii.): The first promise.

1 (xl. 19-xii. 6): The promised Seed and the throne in covenant.

SUBDIVISION 3. (Chaps. xi. 19-xiii.)

The manifestation of the wicked one, and the trinity of evil.

1. ¹ **A**ND the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail. And a

q cf. ch. 15. 5.
cf. ver. 1.
r Heb. 9. 4.
Ex. 37. 1
etc.
s cf. Ex. 19. 16.

to show itself in the reward of prophets and saints and those who fear His name, little as well as great. This seems as general in its aspect as the judgment of the dead, on the other side, unquestionably is. The foremost mention of the prophets as those who have stood in testimony for God on earth is in perfect keeping with the character of the whole book before us, and the destruction of those who destroy the earth is not noticed here apparently as judgment, so much as to assure us of the reparation of the injury to that which came out of His hands at first, and in which He has never ceased to have tender interest, despite the permitted evil of man's day.

SUBD. 3.

The trumpets, as we have seen, carry us to the end of all. What follows, therefore, is not in continuation of them, but a new beginning, in which we find the development of details with regard to that which is opened under the trumpets—as to what is of primary importance, of course, and involving principles of the deepest interest and value for us. Through all, the links between the Old Testament and the New are fully maintained, and we have the full light of the double testimony. Yet shall we need on this account a more patient and protracted examination of that which comes before us.

What we have in the first place now is the manifestation of the wicked one, and indeed of that trinity of evil which appears in the last days, as if in fullest defiance of the divine trinity. The full manifestation of evil upon earth is the prerequisite of the fully manifested judgment. God lays bare first of all that upon which He strikes. In it the harvest of the earth is ripe, for this manifestation is evidently needed as part of the manifestation of Himself which is being made before the eyes of His creatures everywhere. How their gaze will be concentrated upon the earth at this time! And thus the very apparent allowance of the evil is but the necessary preliminary of the judgment itself.

1. And here we come first to what is the commencing of the fulfilment of the first promise given in the ears of fallen man, the promise of the Seed of the woman and His triumph over the serpent. We see fully once more how Genesis and Revelation come together, and how complete the cycle of Scripture is.

¹ The last verse of the eleventh chapter belongs properly to the twelfth. It characterizes what is to follow, rather than what precedes; and when we remember that Israel is upon the scene, it is of the greatest significance. The temple of God is opened in heaven, and there is seen in His temple the ark of His covenant. From the world below, that ark had long disappeared, and the temple itself been overthrown—the testimony to his displeasure with an apostate people. Nor, though the temple were replaced, as after the Babylonish captivity had been the case, could the ark ever be restored by man's hand. It was gone, and with it the token of Jehovah's presence in the midst, a loss evidently irretrievable from man's side. Yet if Israel had no longer itself the assurance of what they were to Him, in heaven all the time, though in secret, the unchangeable goodness of God remained. The ark abode, as it were, with Him; and the time was now come to manifest this. The inner sanctuary of the heavens being open, the ark of the covenant is seen there.

To us who are accustomed to translate these types into the realities they represent, this is all simple. The ark is Christ, and, as the gold *outside* the shittim wood declared, is Christ in glory, gone up after His work accomplished, the

great 'sign was seen in heaven,—a "woman clothed with the "sun, and the "moon beneath her feet, and upon her head a "crown of twelve stars; and being with child she cried, being in "travail, and in pain to bring forth. And there appeared another sign in

t cf. Acts 2.
18.
u cf. Is. 50 1.
v cf. Song 6.
10.
w cf. Gen. 37.
9.
x cf. ch. 7-4.
cf. Mi. 4. 10.

8. y cf. Is. 66. 7-10;

work which had provided the precious blood which had sprinkled the mercy-seat. Israel had indeed rejected the lowly Redeemer, and imprecated upon themselves the vengeance due to those who shed it. Yet, though the wrath came, Israel was neither totally nor finally rejected. The blood of Jesus speaketh better things than that of Abel, and is before God the justification of a grace that has all through been partially and shall yet be fully shown them. The literal ark is passed away, as Jeremiah tells us (iii. 16, 17), never to return; but instead of that throne of His of old, a more magnificent grace has declared that Jerusalem itself shall be called "the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart."

The ark, then, seen in the temple in heaven, is the sign of God's unforgotten grace toward Israel; but the nations are not yet ready to welcome that grace, nor indeed are the people themselves, save the remnant, who on that account pass through the bitterest persecution. To that the chapter following bears decisive testimony, as it does of the interference of God for them. Therefore is it that when the sign of His faithfulness to His covenant is seen in heaven, on the earth there ensue convulsions and a storm of divine wrath: "there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail."

And now a "great sign" appears in heaven, "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered."

The sign appears in heaven, not because the woman is actually there,—plainly she is not,—but because she is seen according to the mind of God toward her. Who the woman is should be quite plain, as the child she brings forth is One who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron. That is Christ assuredly; and the mother of Christ here is not the virgin, as we see clearly by what follows, although His virgin-birth, in its recall of the first prophecy, gives form to what we have in the vision now. Still less is she the Church, of which in no sense is Christ born, but Israel, "of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came," says the apostle (Rom. ix. 5). Thus she is seen clothed with the glory of the sun—that is, of Christ Himself as He will presently appear in supreme power as Sun of Righteousness (Mal. iv. 2); for the sun is the ruler of the day. As a consequence, her glory of old, before the day-dawn, the reflected light of her typical system, is like the moon under her feet. Upon her head the crown of twelve stars speaks naturally of her twelve tribes, planets now around the central sun.

The next words carry us back, however, historically, to the time before Christ. She is in travail with Messiah, a thing hard to realize or understand as to the nation, except as we realize what the fulfilment of God's promise as to Christ involved in the way of suffering on the part of the nation. To them, while under the trial of law and with the issue (to man's thought, of course) uncertain, Christ could not be born. The prosperous days of David must go by; the heirs of David must be allowed to show out what was in their heart, and be carried to Babylon. Humiliation, sorrow, captivity, fail to produce result; while the voice of prophecy even lapses with Malachi, until the long silence as of death is broken by the cry at last, "To us a child is born." Here is at least one purpose, as it would seem, of that triple division of the genealogy of the Lord in Matthew, the governmental Gospel, in which the first fourteen generations bring one to the culmination of their national prosperity; the second is a period of decline to the captivity; the third a period of resurrection, but which

heaven, and behold a great red ^adragon having ^aseven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven ^bdiadems; and his tail drew the third part of the ^cstars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, that when she brought forth he might ^ddevour her child. And she brought forth a ^eson, a male child,

z ver. 9.
a cf. ch. 17.3.
b cf. Jno. 14.
30.
ctr. ch. 19.
12.
c cf. ch. 8.12.
d cf. Matt. 2.
16.
e cf. Isa. 9. 6.

only comes at last, and as in a moment, after the failure of every natural hope. Thus in the government of God Israel has her travail-time.

But before we see the birth of the man-child we are called to look at another sign in heaven—"a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads." These heads and horns we shall presently find upon the fourth beast, the world-empire; but we are not left doubtful as to who the dragon is. It has been argued that it is Rome-pagan, Rome being, in fact, Satan's instrumentality to destroy, if it were possible, the child born; but the teaching is wider here. The heads and the horns are not upon Rome-pagan; and here, as if to preserve from such a thought, we find the first, in all this part, of those interpretations which are henceforth given here and there throughout the book. The dragon, we are told distinctly, is "that ancient serpent which is called the Devil and Satan, who leadeth astray the whole habitable earth." Thus, as the dawn rises upon the battlefield, the combatants are discerned. It is Satan who here, as "the prince of this world," appears as if incarnate, in the last world-empire. "Seven heads" show the perfection of world-wisdom, and every one of these heads wears a *diadem*, or despotic crown. The symbolic meaning of the number does not preclude another meaning historically, as Scripture history is everywhere itself symbolic, as is nature also. The ten horns measure the actual extent of power, and infer by their number responsibility and judgment.

The serpent of old has thus grown into a *dragon*, a monster, "fiery red," as the constant persecutor of the people of God, and he draws with his tail the third part of the stars of heaven, and casts them to the earth. The analogy of the action of the little horn in Daniel (chap. viii. 10), as well as the scope of the prophecy before us, would lead us to think here of Jews, not Christians, and certainly not angels, as to whom the idea of casting them to the earth would seem quite inappropriate. The "tail" implies the false prophet (Isa. ix. 15), and therefore it is apostasy among the professing people of God that is indicated. False teaching is eminently characteristic of Satanic power at all times, and far more successful than open violence.

"And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she was delivered of a son, a man-child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up to God, and to His throne."

The power of Satan working through the heathen empire of Rome was thus, with better knowledge than Rome had, in armed watch against the woman and her Seed. The census mentioned in Luke as to have gone into effect at the time of Christ's birth, and which was actually carried out after the sceptre had wholly departed from Judah, was in effect a tightening of the serpent-coil around his intended victim. Divine power used it to bring a Galilean carpenter and his wife to Bethlehem, and then, as it were without effort, canceled the imperial edict. Only from the nation itself could come the sentence which should, as far as man could do so, destroy it; and that sentence was in Pilate's handwriting upon the cross. But from the cross and the guarded grave the woman's Seed escaped victoriously. "Her child was caught up to God and to His throne." All is thus far easy of interpretation. In what follows there is more difficulty, although it admits of satisfactory solution. "The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

who shall ⁷rule* all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was ⁸caught away to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the ⁹wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that they may sustain her there a 'thousand two hundred and sixty days.

* "Tend as a shepherd."

f cf. Ps. 2.8,9
with ch. 2.
26, 27.
g cf. Lk. 24.
51.
h cf. Hos. 2.
14.
cf. Ezek. 20.
35.
i ch. 11. 2.
ch. 13. 5.

There Daniel's seventieth week comes in again, and evidently the last half of it; but the prophecy goes on immediately from the ascension of Christ to this time, not noticing the gap of more than eighteen centuries which has already intervened between these periods. We have seen already how such an omission is to be explained. But what is the connection between these two things that seem, in more than time, so far apart—the ascension of Christ, and Israel's flight into the wilderness for this half week of years? We have seen that in the seventy weeks themselves there is found a character of Old Testament prophecy which we have to remember here. The last week, although part of a strictly determined time on Israel, is cut off from the sixty-nine preceding by a gap at least equal to that in the vision before us, the sixty-ninth reaching only to Messiah the Prince (Dan. ix. 25). He is cut off, then, and has nothing. The blessing, therefore, cannot at that time come in for them. Instead of this, there is a time of warfare and controversy between God and the people which is not measured, and which is not yet come to an end. Of this, the seventieth week is the conclusion, while also it is the time of their most thorough apostasy, the time to which we have come in this part of Revelation. This lapse of prophecy as to Israel is coincident with the Christian dispensation, the period in which God is taking out of the earth (and characteristically out of the Gentile nations) a *heavenly* people. True there are Jews saved still. "There is at the present time also a remnant according to the election of grace," but these are no longer partakers of Jewish hopes. Blessed be God, they have better ones. The nation as such is in the meanwhile, however, given up, as Micah distinctly declares to them should be the case, while he also declares the reason of this, and the limit which God has appointed to it. His words are one of the clearest of Old Testament prophecies to Christ, so clear that nothing could be clearer, and are those cited by the chief priests and scribes themselves in proof of "where Christ should be born." "They shall smite the Judge of Israel," says the prophet, "with a rod upon the cheek." It is His people who do this, His own to whom He came and they "received Him not." Then he declares the glory of the rejected One. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting" (Micah v. 2). But what will be the result, then, of this rejection? This is answered immediately. "Therefore will He *give them up* until the time that she which travailed hath brought forth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return unto the children of Israel."

The last sentence of this remarkable prophecy is a clear intimation of what we know to be the fact, that in this time of national rejection there would be "brethren" (Jewish evidently) of this Judge of Israel, whose place would not be *with* Israel, while at the end of the time specified such converted ones would again find their place in the nation. Meanwhile, Israel being given up, the blessing of the earth, which waits upon theirs, is suspended also. The shadow rests upon the dial-plate of prophecy; time is, as it were, uncounted. Christ is gone up on high and sits upon the Father's throne. The kingdom of heaven is begun indeed, but only its "mysteries," unknown to the Old Testament, "things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world."

Here, then, where we return to take up the thread of Old Testament prophecy, it is no wonder if the style of the Old Testament be again found. We have again the gap in time uncounted, the Christian dispensation treated as a paren-

² (xii. 7-9):
War in
heaven
and the
enemy
cast out.

² And there was ^jwar in heaven. ^kMichael and his
angels went to war with the dragon, and the dragon
made war and his angels; and he ^lprevailed not, neither

^j ctr. Lk. 19.
38.
^k cf. Jude 9.
^l cf. Dan. 10.
21.

^l cf. 1 Jno. 4. 4; cf. Heb. 2. 14.

thesis in God's ways with the earth, and the woman's Seed caught away to God and to His throne.* Then follows, without apparent interval, the Jewish flight into the wilderness during the three and a half years of unequalled tribulation. The Jewish character of all this part of Revelation is seen once more in this return to the character of Old Testament prophecy.

But this does not answer the question as to the connection between the catching away of the man-child and the woman's flight. For this we must look deeper than the surface, and gather the suggestions which in Scripture everywhere abound, and here only more openly than usual demand attention.

That which closes the Christian dispensation we have seen to be what is significantly parallel to that which opens it. In the Acts, the history of the Church is prefaced with the ascension of the Lord. That which will close its history is the removal of His people. This naturally rouses the inquiry, If Christ and His people be so one, as in the New Testament they are continually represented, may not the man-child here include both, and the gap be bridged over in this way? The promise to the overcomer in Thyatira links them together in what is attributed to the man-child, the ruling of the nations with a rod of iron, and the mention of this seems to intimate that the time for the assumption of the rod is at hand.

This, then, completes the picture, and harmonizes it so that it may be well accepted as the truth; especially as this acceptance only recognizes that which is otherwise known to be true, and makes no additional demands upon belief.

The man-child caught up to God and to His throne, the woman flees into the wilderness unto a place prepared of God, where she is nourished for the time of trouble. The woman is the nation as in the sight of God, not all Israel, nor even all the saints in Israel, but those who are ordained of God to continue the nation, and who therefore represent it before Him. The apostate mass are cut off by judgment (Zech. xiii. 8, 9; Isa. iv. 3, 4). The martyred saints go up to heaven. Still God preserves a people to be the nucleus of the millennial nation; and this, of course, it is the special desire of Satan to destroy. They are preserved by the hand of God, though amid trial such as the wilderness naturally indicates, and which is designed of God for their purification.

² And now there ensues that which in the common belief of Christians has long ago taken place, but which, in fact, is the initial stage of the final judgment: Satan is cast out of heaven. The simplest interpretation to this is counter to the common belief of Christendom. Satan has, according to the thought of many, long been in hell, though he is strangely enough allowed to leave it and ramble over the world at will. To these it is a grotesque, weird and unnatural thought that the devil should have been suffered all this time to remain in heaven. Man has evidently been allowed to remain on earth, though fallen; but then, beside the fact of death removing his successive generations, towards him there are purposes of mercy, in which Satan has no part. The vision-character of Revelation may be objected against it also, so that the simplest interpretation may seem on that very account the wisest from the truth. Does not our Lord also say that He saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven? (Luke x. 18), and the apostle, that the angels which sinned He cast down to hell? (2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6). Such passages would seem, with many, decisively to affirm the ordinary view.

In fact, it is only the last passages that have any real force; and here another

* Many see here the Church associated with Christ—that is, the rapture of the saints, as well as the ascension of our Lord. The expression, however, "to God and His throne" would seem to confine it to our Lord as Head in its primary thought.—S. R.

was their place found any more in heaven; and the great dragon was "cast out, the "ancient serpent, who is called the "Devil and "Satan, who "leadeth astray

m cf. Lk. 10.
18.
cf. Is. 14. 12.
cf. Is. 24. 21.
cf. Jno. 12.
cf. 2 Cor. 4. 4.

31; cfr. Eph. 6. 12. n cf. Gen. 3. 1; ch. 20. 2. o cf. 1 Pet. 5. 8. p cf. 1 Cor. 5. 5. q cf. 2 Cor. 4. 4.

has said, "It seems hardly possible to consider Satan as one of these,"—the angels spoken of,—"for they are in chains, and guarded till the great day; he is still permitted to go about as the tempter and the adversary until his appointed time be come."*

As to our Lord's words, they are easily to be understood as in the manner often of prophecy; "I saw" being equivalent to "I foresaw."

On the other hand, that "the spiritual hosts of wickedness" with which now we wrestle are in heavenly places, is told us plainly in Eph. vi. 12, and in the passage in Revelation before us no less plainly. For the connection of this vision with what is still future we have already seen, and shall see further, and the application to Satan personally ought not to be in doubt. The "dragon" is indeed a symbol; but "the Devil and Satan" is the interpretation of it, and certainly not to be treated as symbolic, as the "dragon" is.

Scripture implies also in other ways what we find here. When the apostle speaks of our being "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," he adds that it is to be that "until the redemption of the purchased possession;" that is, until we get the inheritance itself (Eph. i. 14). But we get it then by redemption, not our own, but of the inheritance itself. Our inheritance has to be redeemed; and the redemption takes place manifestly when the heirs as a whole are ready for it. Now redemption in this case, like the redemption of the body, is a redemption by power, God laying hold of it to set it free, in some sense, from a condition of alienation from Himself, and to give His people possession. And if the man-child include those who are Christ's at His coming, then the purging of the heavenly places by the casting of Satan and His angels out, is just the redemption of the heavenly inheritance.

Elsewhere we read, accordingly, of the *reconciliation* of heavenly as of earthly things (Col. i. 20). And this is a phrase which, like the former, implies previous alienation; and here it is on the ground of the cross: "having made peace through the blood of the cross." In Hebrews again, as "it was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens"—as in the tabernacle—"should be purified with" sacrificial blood, so must "the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb. ix. 23). The work of Christ having glorified God as to the sin which has defiled, not the world only, but the heavens, He can come in to deliver and bring back to Himself what is to be made the inheritance of Christ and His "joint-heirs."

All is, then, of a piece with what is the only natural meaning of this war in heaven. The question of good and evil, everywhere one, receives its answer for heaven as for earth, first, in the work of Christ, which glorifies God as to all, and then as the fruit of this in the recovery of what was alienated from Him, the enemies of this glorious work being put under Christ's feet. This now begins to take effect, though even yet in a way which to us may seem strange: strange it does seem to hear of war in heaven, even though Milton has sought to make it familiar to us, while putting it, however, in a wrong place; to hear of arrayed hosts on either side—of resistance, though unsuccessful, the struggle being left, as it would seem, to creature-prowess, God not directly interfering: "Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not."

After all, is it stranger that this should be in heaven than on the earth? Are not God's ways one? And is not all the long-protracted struggle allowed pur-

* Principal Barry, in Smith's Dictionary.

* (10-12):
The redemption
of the pos-
session.

the whole habitable earth; he was cast out unto the earth and his angels were cast out with him.

³ And I heard a great voice in ⁷heaven saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ; for the ⁸accuser of our brethren is cast out, who accused them before our God day and night: and *they* ⁹overcame him because of the ¹⁰blood of the Lamb, and because of the ¹¹word of their testimony; and they ¹²loved not their life unto death. Therefore ¹³rejoice, ye heavens, and ye

r cf. ch. 19.1, etc.

s cf. Job 1.6-12.

s cf. Job 2.1-6.

cf. Zech. 3.1.

t cf. 1 Jno. 2.13.

cf. Gen. 3.15.

u cf. Heb. 2.14.

v cf. Phil. 1.20.

cf. Rom. 16.20.

cf. Is. 44.23.

20. *w* cf. Lk. 14. 26, 27. *x* ch. 18. 20; *cf.* Is. 44. 23.

posely to work out to the end thus, the superior power being left to show itself as the power resident in the good by reason of its goodness, and as in that which is the key of the whole problem, the cross of the Son of man? If God Himself enter the contest, He adapts Himself to the creature-conditions, and comes in on the lowest level, not as an angel even, but a *man*.

Let us look again at the combatants. On the one side is Michael,—"Who is like God?"—a beautiful name for the leader in such a struggle. On the opposite side is he who first said to the woman, "Ye shall be as God;" and whose pride was his own condemnation (1 Tim. iii. 6). How clearly the moral principle of the contest is here defined! Keep but the creature's place, and you are safe, happy, and holy. The enemy shall not prevail against you. Leave it, and you are lost. The "dragon"—from a root which speaks of keen sight—typifies what seems perhaps a preternatural brilliancy of intellect, serpent-cunning, the full development of such wisdom as that with which he tempted Eve, but none of that which begins with the fear of God. He is therefore, like all that are developed merely upon one side, a monster. This want of conscience is shown in his being the *Devil*, the false accuser. His heart is made known in his being Satan, *the adversary*.

These are the types of those that follow them; and Michael is always the warrior-angel, characterized as he is by his name; as Gabriel—"man of God"—is the messenger of God to men. If God draw near to men, it is in the tender familiarity of manhood that He does so. How plainly, then, do these names speak to us!

In the time of distress that follows upon earth, Daniel is told that "Michael shall stand up, the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people . . . and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Here in Revelation we have the heavenly side of things, but still it is Michael that stands up as the deliverer. The tactics of divine warfare are not various, but simple and uniform. Truth is simple, and one; error, manifold and intricate. The spiritual hosts fight under faith's one standard, and it is the banner of Michael, "Who is like God?" Under its folds is certain victory.

The dragon is cast out: the war in that respect is over; heaven is free. But he is not yet cast into hell, nor even into the bottomless pit, but to the *earth*; and thus the earth's great time of trouble ensues. Satan comes down with great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time. How terrible a thing is sin! How amazing that a full, clear view of what is before him should only inspire this fallen being with fresh energy of hate, to that which must recoil upon himself and add intensity of torment to eternal doom! Even so is every act of sin, as it were a suicide; and he who committeth it is the slave of sin (John viii. 34).

³ A great voice in heaven celebrates the triumph there. "Now is come the salvation and power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night." The salvation spoken of here is not apparently, as

4 (13-17):
The wo-
man in the
wilderness.

that tabernacle in them. "Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil is come down unto you having great wrath, knowing that he hath a short time.

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the male child: and there were given to the woman two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is sustained

y ch. 8. 13.
z ver. 17.
cf. 1 Pet. 5. 8.
a ctr. Jno. 9.
4.
cf. Lk. 9. 42.
b cf. Matt.
24. 9.
c cf. Ex. 19. 4.
cf. Is. 40. 31.
d ver. 6.
cf. Hos. 2. 14.
15.

some think, the salvation of the body, for it is explained directly as deliverance of some who are called "our brethren," from the accusation of Satan. The voice seems, therefore, that of the glorified saints, and the brethren, of whom they speak, the saints on earth who had indeed by individual faithfulness overcome in the past those accusations which are now forever ended. "Satan's anti-priestly power," as another has remarked, "is at an end."

Yet he may, and does, after this, exercise imperial power, and stir up the most violent persecution of the people of God; and these still may be called not to love their lives unto the death. It is not here, then, that his power ceases. They have conflict still, but not with principalities and powers in heavenly places. Heaven is quiet and calm above them, if around is still the noise of the battle; and how great is the mercy which thus provides for them during those three and a half years of unequalled tribulation! Is not this worthy of God that just at the time when Satan's rage is the greatest, and arming his power against God's people, the sanctuary of the soul is no more invaded by him! The fiery darts of the wicked one cease; he is no more "prince of the power of the air," but restricted to earth simply, to work through the passions of men which he can inflame against them.

"Accordingly, to this he gives himself with double energy: "When the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man-child." But God interferes: "There were given unto the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."

The words recall plainly the deliverance from Egypt. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is called thus by the prophet "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers" (Ezek. xxix. 3), and is himself the concentration of the malice of the great world-power, while God says to delivered Israel at Sinai, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself" (Ex. xix. 4). The reference here seems definitely to this. It is not, as in the common version, "a" great eagle, but the great eagle—the griffon perhaps, than which no bird has a more powerful or masterly flight. Clearly it is divine power that is referred to in these words: in deliverance out of Egypt there was jealous exclusion of all power beside. Israel was to be taught the grace and might of a Saviour-God; and so in the end again it will be, when He repeats in a grander way the marvels of that old deliverance, and allures the heart of the nation to Himself.

Miracle may well come in again for them, and it may be that the wilderness literally will once more provide shelter and nourishment for them. Figure and fact may here agree together; and so it often is. The terms even seem to imply the literal desert here, just because it is evidently a place of shelter that divine love provides, and sustenance there; and what more natural than that the desert, by which the land of Israel is half encompassed, should be used for this?

That which follows seems to be imagery borrowed from the desert also. Like the streams of Antilibanus, many a river is swallowed up in the sand, as that which is now poured out of the dragon's mouth. If it be an army that is pictured, the wilderness is no less capable of the preservation of a nation's strength. The river being cast out of his mouth would seem to show that it is by the power

a time and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent ^ecast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might make her to be carried away of the river; and the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and ^ddrank up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the ^grest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus.

e cf. Is. 8.7.8.
cf. Jer. 46.8.
cf. Is. 17.12,
13.

f cf. 2Chron.
20. 23, 24.

g cf. ch. 11.7.
cf. Matt. 10.
22, 23.

of his persuasion that men are incited to this overflow of enmity against the people of God; and this is so completely foiled that the baffled adversary gives up further effort in this direction, and the objects of his pursuit are after this left absolutely unassailed.

But those who so escape, while thus securing the existence of the nation, and therefore identified with the woman herself, are not the whole number of those who in it are converted to God; and "the remnant of her seed" become now the object of his furious assault. These are indeed those, as it would seem, with whom is the testimony of Jesus, which is, we are assured, "the spirit of prophecy" (chap. xix. 10). These are they, perhaps, who amid these days of trouble go forth, as from age to age the energy of the Spirit has incited men to go forth, taking their lives in their hand, that they may bring the word of God before His creatures, and who have ever been, of necessity, the special objects of satanic enmity. They are the new generation, of those who, as men of God, have stood forth prominently for God upon the earth, and have taken, from men on the one hand their reward in persecution, but from God on the other the sweet counterbalancing acknowledgment.

Noticeable it is that it is in heaven this new race of prophets still find their reward. The two witnesses whom we have seen ascend to heaven in the cloud belong to this number, and those who in Daniel, as turning many to righteousness, shine as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. xii. 3). Earth casts them out, and they are seen in our Lord's prophecy as brethren of the King, hungering and athirst, in strangership, naked and sick and in prison (Matt. xxv. 35, 36, 40). Heaven receives them in delight as those of whom the earth was not worthy, a gleaner after harvest, as it were, of wheat for God's granary, the last sheaf of the resurrection-saints which the twentieth chapter of the book before us sees added to the sitters upon the thrones, among the blessed and holy now complete. How well are they cared for who might seem left unsheltered to Satan's enmity! They have lost the earthly blessing, they have gained the heavenly; their light has been quenched for a time, to shine in a higher sphere forever. Blessed be God! We may follow, then, the new development of satanic enmity without fear. We shall gain from considering it. Their enemy and ours is one and the same. It is Satan, the old serpent, the ancient homicide; and we must not be ignorant of his devices. His destiny is to be overcome, and that by the feeblest saint against whom he seems for the present to succeed so easily.

2. Satan being now in full activity of opposition to the woman and her Seed, we are carried on to see further his efforts to destroy them. Working, as from the beginning, through instruments in which he conceals himself, we find ourselves now face to face with his great instrument in the last days, in which, too, we recognize one long before spoken of in the prophets, especially by him to whom, in the book of Revelation, we have such frequent reference—the apocalyptic prophet of the Old Testament.

It is indeed, without dispute, the fourth beast of Daniel to which the word of inspiration now directs our attention. "I saw," says the apostle, "a beast coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads names of blasphemy."

2 (xiii. 1-10): The devil's delegate.

2. And I* stood upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast† arising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the beast which

h cf. Dan. 7.
3.
cf. ch. 17. 15.
cf. ch. 17. 8.
i cf. ch. 17. 9
-12.
cf. Dan. 7. 7,
8.

* Some old MSS. read "he stood," referring thus to the dragon, as in R. V. † *θηρίον* a wild beast,—all through chaps. xiii. and xiv.

The four beasts of Daniel's vision answer, as every one knows, to the one human figure seen by the king of Babylon. In his eyes there is at least the likeness of man, although there is no breath, no life. To the prophet afterward the world-empires appear on the other hand full of life, but *it is bestial*. One of the chapters between supplies the link between the two: for Nebuchadnezzar is himself driven out among the beasts, as we see in the fourth chapter, for a disciplinary punishment, until he knows "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." In a pride which has forgotten God, he has become but a beast which knows none. He is therefore driven out among the beasts until seven times pass over him. The prophet sees thus the powers of the world to be but beasts, *wild* beasts indeed, as here.

As the fourth beast moreover, the successor and heir to those that have been before it, the last empire not only shows still this bestial nature—it combines in itself the various characters of the first three. It is in general form like the leopard or Greek empire, agile and swift in its attacks, as the leopard is known to be; but it has the feet of the bear, the Persian tenacity of grasp; and the mouth of the lion, the Babylonian ferocity. Beast it is clearly, yet not in simple ignorance of God, as the beast is, for its seven heads are seen to have on each of them a name of blasphemy.

In its ten horns it differs from all before it, and these, we are explicitly told (chap. xvii. 12, 13), are "ten kings which give their power unto the beast." In the vision now we find these kings actually crowned. Old Rome never had these ten kings, as we know; and thus if it be Rome here, as is surely the case, it is Rome as new-risen among the nations in the latter days.

The latter chapter, to which we have just now referred, speaks plainly of a time when the beast that was "is not;" and for centuries we are well aware the empire has not existed. But the same prophecy assures us that it is to be again, and in the vision before us we find it accordingly risen up as of old, from the sea—that is to say, from the restless strife of the nations. As we have seen, however, that is not the only way in which it is beheld, as rising again, for in the history of the witnesses it has been spoken of as ascending up out of the bottomless pit; and this is repeated in the seventeenth chapter—"the beast . . . shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition." Are these two ascents, then, or only one, looked at from two sides?

Again, of its heads, one is said in the present chapter to be wounded to death, but its deadly wound was healed, and afterward the beast is spoken of as having had the wound by a sword and living (ver. 14). Are these still various ways of expressing but the same thing, or not? And is there any way of deciding this?

Certainly the long lapse of centuries during which the beast "was not" could hardly seem to be described as its having a wound and living, or as a deadly wound which could be healed. Let us look more closely at the prophecy, or rather at the different prophecies about this, and see what may be gathered.

In Daniel we have no mention of the time of non-existence or of the plurality of heads upon the beast, but the ten horns show us that the empire there too is before us as it exists in the latter days, as it is plain also that it is in this form that the judgment there described comes upon it. But the prophet, considering these ten horns, sees rising up after them another little horn in which are developed those blasphemous characters that bring down its final judgment upon the

I saw was like unto a ^jleopard, and his feet were as those of a ^kbear, and his mouth was as the mouth of a ^llion; and the ^mdragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. And [I saw] ⁿone of

j cf. Dan. 7. 6.
k cf. Dan. 7. 5.
l cf. Dan. 7. 4.
m ch. 12. 3.
n cf. ch. 6. 2 with ch. 9. 1-11.

beast. It speaks great words against the Most High, and wears out the saints of the Most High, and thinks to change times and the law; and they are given into his hands until a time, and times, and a dividing of a time; that is, for the last half-week of Daniel's seventy, just before the Lord comes and the judgment follows.

Now this last horn rises up after the first ten are in existence, and therefore after the empire has assumed its latter-day form; and if this little horn be that whose "dominion" brings judgment upon the beast, then it would seem that the eleventh horn and the eighth head of Revelation must be the same.

The seven heads are not in Daniel, nor is the eleventh horn in Revelation, but we may learn in both of these, details by means of which we can compare them. Thus as to the heads, five had fallen when the angel spoke to John (chap. xvii. 10); one existed; another was to come, to last but a short time, and then would be the eighth, or the beast in its final form, identified with its head here as morally at least with the little horn in Daniel.

We have anticipated somewhat, and seem obliged for our purpose to anticipate what is given us only in the seventeenth chapter, before the history of these latter days will be in measure clear to us. Let us seek first to get hold of the point of time which the interpretation contemplates as present. When the angel says to John, "The woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," we know that at the time of the revelation there was one city, and but one, to which his words could apply. It was Rome that ruled over the kings of the earth, even as Rome fills out his description also in another respect, being notoriously the seven-hilled city. That Rome is in fact the city spoken of, is, spite of the effort of a few to find another application, the verdict of the mass of commentators of all times, and this interpretation of the woman seems given by the angel as what would need no further explanation.

The ten horns, on the other hand, he states to be future: "The ten horns are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet." Here we see that the point of view is still that of the apostle himself; and when it is said of the heads "five are fallen and one is," the heads are plainly seen to be successional, and themselves are generally referred to what Livy has given as the five different forms of government under which Rome had been before that sixth, the imperial, which existed in the apostle's day. The point of view, at any rate, seems here quite plain.

It is a curious coincidence that if in Daniel's vision of the fourth beast we connect the four heads of the leopard with the other three of the remaining ones, we have just seven; and it has been argued that these are, in fact, the seven heads upon the beast in Revelation, because the beast here has the characteristics of more than the fourth beast in Daniel; but then six heads should have fallen and not five, when the angel spoke. The sixth also would be the last Grecian head, and the Roman would be future. That the heads are successive is quite plain, and there seems no room for any other application than that of the sixth head to the emperor of Rome.

Another thing should be considered here, whether the heads are indeed expressed by the five forms of government of which Livy has spoken, and whether they do not rather refer to the great imperial powers of the world up to that time, which would in that case take in Egypt and Assyria, as well as Babylon, Persia, and Greece. Rome would thus be the sixth imperial head, the beast

his heads as if it had been smitten* unto death; and his deadly wound was °healed; and all the earth °wondered after the beast. And they °worshiped the dragon because he gave authority to the beast: and they °worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? and who is able to make war with him? And there was given him a °mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and there was given to him authority to practise °forty and two months. And

* Greek, "slain."

o cf. Dan. 7.
8.
cf. ch. 17.8.
p cf. Acts 8.
10, 11.
q ctr. Matt.
4. 9, 10.
r cf. vers. 14,
15.
cf. Acts 12.
21-23.
s ctr. Ex. 15.
11.
t cf. Dan. 7.8,
11, 20, 25.
cf. Dan. 11.
36. u ch. 11. 2; ch. 12. 6.

being considered here as the world-power in general opposed to God and His people all the way through, and coming into more and more blasphemous expression of this as the end approaches. This may seem more scriptural as derived indeed from Scripture itself, as the other is not, while the forms of government under which Rome existed, previous to the imperial, may seem to have but little to do with what is here before us. The beast manifestly combining also in itself the characters of the other beasts of Daniel would seem to agree with this, and is in general suitability to this final picture which the book of Revelation presents as the summing up of previous history, and thus presenting the world-power in its practical unity through all time.

At any rate, there can be no right question that the sixth head is the imperial power of Rome. The seventh would follow at an uncertain period in the future, and the application here has been various—to the exarchate of Ravenna, to Charlemagne, to Napoleon. It is not needful to enter into any elaborate disproof of these, as that putting together of prophecy, of the necessity of which the apostle warns us, will show sufficiently how inadmissible they are.

"The beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven," says the angel: "one of the seven," Bleek with others takes it to mean; "sprung from the seven," says Alford. But the last, if we are to interpret the sixth as we must do, can scarcely be maintained. If we are to say "one of the seven," then we may tentatively suppose it to be the seventh revived, and, put in this way, other passages throw light upon it.

The seventh head was to continue but a little while; in contrast plainly with those that had preceded it; but one of the heads (it is not stated which) was to be wounded to death and live, as we have seen. It is on this account that the world wonders after the beast; and that is clearly at the end; so that it is either the eighth head itself that is wounded and revives, or else the eighth head, which is the seventh revived, as seems to be rather the teaching of prophecy. This thought unites and makes plain the different passages.

The beast (under this eighth head) "practises forty and two months," the last half week of Daniel's seventy. Yet "the prince that shall come" makes his covenant with the Jews for the whole last week, in the midst of which he breaks it (Dan. ix. 27). Does not this show that not only are the seventh and eighth heads identical as heads, but individually also? And does it not confirm very strongly as truth what at first appeared to be only supposition? In this manner Daniel's prophecy of the little horn would describe his second rise to power after having fallen from being the seventh head of the beast to a rank below that of the ten kings. From this, partly by force, partly by concession, gained, as we shall see, by the aid of him who discerns in the fallen ruler a fitting instrument for his devilish ends, he rises to his former prominence over them all, filled with the animosity against God with which the dragon, prince of this world, has inspired him; for "the dragon gives him his power and his throne and great authority."

The picture seems complete, and the outline harmonious in all its details. It

he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and* those "tabernacled in heaven. And it was given to him to make "war with the saints, and to overcome them; and authority was given to him over "every tribe and people and tongue and nation; and all the dwellers upon the earth shall worship him, "whose names are not written from the foundation of the world† in the book of life of the "Lamb slain. If any one hath an ear, "let him hear. If any one ^bleadeth into captivity, he goeth into captivity. If any one shall ^ckill with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Here is the ^dpatience and the faith of the saints.

v cf. ch. 12.
12.
w ch. 11. 7.
ch. 12. 17.
cf. Dan. 7.
21.
x ctr. ch. 19.
16.
y cf. ch. 3.5.
cf. Phil. 4.3.
cf. ch. 20.12,
15.
cf. Eph. 1.4.
z ch. 5. 12.
a ch. 3. 22,
etc.
b cf. Is. 33. 1.
cf. Is. 17.14.
c cf. Matt.
26. 52.
d ch. 14. 12.
cf. ch. 1. 9.

* Some omit "and."

† So far as the language is concerned, this might be translated, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

agrees with what has been before suggested, the rise of the seventh head under the first seal; its collapse under the fourth trumpet; its revival through satanic influence under the sixth. Its judgment takes place under the seventh, but the details of this are unfolded in the latter part of Revelation. We see that the conspiracy of the second psalm, of the kings and rulers "against the Lord and His Anointed," is by no means over. Nay, the Gentile power that wrote defiantly His title on His cross is risen up again, and with even more than its old defiance. The long-suffering of the Lord has not been, to it, salvation. The exhortation to "kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way," has not been heeded. Rome still vindicates its title to its position as the head of a hostile world. "I gave her space to repent, and she will not repent," is as true of her in her civil as in her ecclesiastical character.

The revival of the last empire is Satan's mockery of resurrection. Yet God is over it and in it, commanding her from her tomb for judgment; and with her, other buried nations are to revive and come forth to the light. Greece has thus revived. Italy has revived. Israel, as we well know, is reviving, and for her also there is not unmingled blessing, but solemn and terrible judgment that will leave but a remnant for the final promise surely to be fulfilled. Israel was foremost in the rejection of her Lord when first "He came to His own and His own received Him not." It was they who used Gentile hands to execute the sentence which they lacked power themselves to carry out, and it is strange indeed to find in these awful last days of blasphemy and rebellion the Jew still inspiring the Gentile in the last outburst of infidel pride and lawlessness. The second beast in the chapter before us is at once Jewish and, by its lamblike appearance and its dragon voice, antichristian.

And this is that to which, unwarned by the sure word of prophecy, men are hurrying on. The swiftness of the current that is carrying them, owned as it is by all, is for them progress, while it is but the power felt near the cataract. "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." So said the lips that uttered that lament over Jerusalem, which, with added force, may speak to us to-day. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not!" There is a special urgency of warning here which must surely have especial meaning for us; for this power that we have just been contemplating will yet bow all the dwellers upon earth to worship, whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb slain. Sovereign grace alone can save any out of the dreadful delusion which is here prophesied. "If any one hath an ear, let him hear." Such words may show us also that

3 (xiii. 11-18): The signs of the false prophet.

3. And I saw ^eanother beast rising out of the earth; * and he had two horns ^flike a lamb, and spake as a ^gdragon. And he ^hexerciseth all the authority of the

^e cf. 1 Jno. 2. 18, 22.
^f cf. 2 Jno. 7.
^g cf. Jno 5. 43.
^h 2 Thess. 2. 3-12.
ⁱ cf. Dan. 11. 4 with ch. 19. 20.

* Or, "land."

36-39. ^f ctr. Jno. 1. 29; ^{ctr.} ch. 5. 6. ^g cf. Matt. 7. 15. ^h ctr. ver. 4 with ch. 19. 20.

this prophecy, and that which is connected with it, cannot but have distinctness of utterance, whether we realize it or not. The warning is like that appended, as we have seen, to the seven addresses of the second and third chapters, only there it is "what the Spirit saith to the churches." Here it is wider, clearly. God would have all men listen; and there are still saints, as we know, who will thus be saved by the delivering grace of God; for we are told directly of the patience and faith of the saints. The grace victorious over this apostate is only the prelude to his destruction: "If any one leadeth into captivity, he goeth into captivity; if any one shall kill with the sword, he must be killed with the sword." The saints of that day draw no sword in opposition. They wait simply upon God, upon whom none can wait in vain.

3. Along with the resurrection of the imperial power, we are now shown in the vision the uprise of another wild beast which we have nowhere else brought before us in this character. We shall have, therefore, more attentively to consider the description given, and what means we have for identification of the power or person who is described, so that the prophecy may be brought out of the isolation which would make it incapable of interpretation, and may speak at least with its full weight of moral instruction for our souls.

The one seen is another wild beast, and this character is clear enough. The empires of Daniel are "beasts," in that they know not God. The thought of the *wild* beast adds to this that savage cruelty which will, of course, display itself against those who are God's. Inasmuch as the other beasts are powers, it would seem as if here too were a power, royal or imperial; and this is confirmed by other intimations.

It is seen rising up out of the *earth*, and not out of the *sea*. The latter symbol evidently applies to the nations, the Gentiles. Does not, then, this power rise out of the nations? The "earth" has been thought to mean a settled state of things into which the nations now have got, a state of things very unlikely at the period we are considering, and which would seem rather imageable as quiet water than as "earth." Looking back to the first chapter of Genesis, in which we surely get the essential meaning of these figures, and where typically the six days reveal the story of the dispensations on to the final Sabbath-rest of God, we find the earth, in its separation from the waters on the third day, speaking of Israel as separated from the Gentiles. If this be true interpretation, as there is no need to doubt, it is an *Israelitish* power with which we are here brought face to face. Political events to-day look to a Jewish resurrection as something in the near future scarcely problematical. Prophecies that we have already to some extent considered intimate that Jewish unbelief is yet to unite with an apostasy of Christendom, and culminate in a "man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. ii. 3, 4). Thus we may be prepared to find here a blasphemous, persecuting power rising up in the restored nation; and this may help us to the awful significance of what follows in this place—"He had two horns like a lamb, and spake as a dragon."

"Two horns like a lamb." The "lamb" is a title so significant in the present book, nay, of such controlling significance, that any reference to it must be considered of corresponding importance. The two horns, then, are of course an intimation that the power exercised by the one before us (for the horn is a well-known symbol of power) is twofold. What is the twofold character of the power here? It seems as if there could be but one meaning. Christ's power is two-

first beast in his presence, and causeth the earth * and those that dwell in it to 'worship the first beast whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great ^j signs, so as even to cause ^k fire to come down out of heaven unto the earth in sight of mēn. And he ^lleadeth astray those that dwell upon the earth, on account of the signs which were given him to do in the presence of the beast, saying to those that dwell upon the earth that they should make an ^mimage to the beast, who had the wound with a sword, and lived; and it was given to

t ver. 8.

f cf. Matt. 24.

11. 24.

cf. 2 Thess.

2. 9.

k cf. 2 Ki. 1.

10.

l cf. 1 Jno. 4.

1-3.

m cf. Dan. 3.

1, etc.

cf. Matt. 24.

15.

cf. Ezek. 8.

3.

* Or, "land."

fold as manifested in the day that is coming. He is "a Priest upon the throne," ■ royal priest, with spiritual authority as well as kingly. This the blasphemous usurper before us assumes, and this manifests him, without possibility of mistake that one can see, as Antichrist.

He is betrayed by his voice. His speech is that of a dragon. He is inspired, in fact, by Satan. There is no sweet and gracious message upon his lips. It is not he who has been man's burden-bearer and the sinner's saviour. No gentleness and meekness, but the tyranny of the destroyer; no heavenly wisdom, but Satan's craft utters itself through him. Arrogant as he is, he is the miserable tool of man's worst enemy and his own.

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast in his presence." He is the representative of the newly constituted empire of the West, not locally merely, but in some sense throughout it; and thus, as standing for another, he is still the awful mockery of Him who is on the throne, the Father's Representative. This is developed by the next words to its full extent: "He causeth the earth and they that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great signs, so that he maketh fire to descend from heaven upon the earth before men." Here the very miracle which Elijah once wrought to turn back the hearts of apostate Israel to the true God, he is permitted to do, at least *apparently*, to turn men to a false one. Men are being given up to be deceived. God is sending them, as it is declared in Thessalonians will be, "a strong delusion that they may believe the lie, because they received not the love of the truth." The word of God, announcing this beforehand, would of course be the perfect safeguard of those that trusted it; and this very miracle, as it would appear, would be a sign to the elect, not of Christ, but of Antichrist. But to the men that dwell upon the earth—a moral characteristic which distinguishes those who, as apostate from Christianity, have given up all their hope of heaven, and who are all through this part specially pointed out—heaven itself would seem to seal the pretensions of the deceiver. "And he deceiveth the dwellers upon the earth by means of the signs which it was given him to do in the presence of the beast, saying to the dwellers upon earth that they should make an image to the beast that had a wound by the sword and lived. And it was given him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause those that would not worship the image of the beast to be slain."

Is a literal image of the beast intended here, or is it some representative of imperial authority such as the historical interpreters in general, though in various ways, have made it to be? Against such thought there would be in itself no objection, but rather the reverse, the book being so symbolical throughout; but it is the second beast itself that is the representative of the authority of the first beast; and on the other hand an apparent creation-miracle would not be unlikely to be attempted by one claiming to be divine. Notice that it is not "life" that he gives to it, as the common version says, nor "spirit,"—though the word may

him to give "breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be slain. And he causeth all, small and great,

n cf. Ps. 115.
4-7.
o cf. Dan. 3.
6.

be translated so,—but "breath," which, as the alternative rendering, is plainly the right one, supposing it to be a literal image.

Our Lord's words as to "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place" are in evident connection with this, and confirm the thought. "Abomination" is the regular word in the Old Testament to express what idolatry is in the sight of God. But here it is established in what was but a while before professedly His temple; for until the middle of Daniel's seventieth week, from the beginning of it, sacrifice and oblation have been going on among the returned people in Jerusalem. This was under the shelter of the covenant with that Gentile prince of whom the prophet speaks as the coming one. At first he is clearly, therefore, not inspired with that malignity toward God which he afterwards displays. Now, energized by Satan, from whom he holds his throne, and incited by the dread power that holds Jerusalem itself, he makes his attack upon Jehovah's throne, and, as represented by this image, takes his place in defiance in the sanctuary of the Most High.

The connection of this prophecy with those in Daniel and in Matthew makes plain the reason of the image being made and worshiped. The head of the Roman earth and of this last and worst idolatry, is not in Judea, but at Rome; and he who is in Judea, of whatever marvelous power possessed, is yet only the delegate of the Roman head. Thus, the image is made to represent this supreme power, and the worship paid to it is in perfect accordance with this. Here in Judea, where alone now there is any open pretension to worship the true God—here there is call for the most decisive measures. And thus the death-penalty proclaimed for those who do not worship. Jerusalem is the centre of the battlefield, and here the opposition must be smitten down. "And he causeth all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and bond, that they should give them a mark upon their right hand or upon their forehead, and that none should be able to buy or sell except he had the mark, the name of the wild beast, or the number of his name."

Thus, then, is that great tribulation begun of which the Lord spoke in His prophecy in view of the temple. We can understand that the only hope while this evil is permitted to have its course, is that flight to the mountains which He enjoins on those who listen to His voice. Israel have refused that sheltering "wing" under which He would so often have gathered them, and they must be left to the awful "wing of abominations" (Dan. ix. 27, Heb.), on account of which presently the desolator from the north swoops down upon the land. Still, His pity, whom they have forsaken, has decreed a limit, and "for His elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days."

Why is it that "breath" is given to the image? Is it in defiance of the prophet's challenge of the dumb idols which "speak not through their mouth?" Certainly to make an image speak in such a place, against the Holy One, would seem the climax of apostate insolence; but it only shows that the end is near.

What can be said of the number of the beast? The words "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast" seem directly to refer to those whom Daniel calls "the wise," or "they that understand among the people," of whom it is said, concerning the words of the vision closed up and sealed until the time of the end, that "none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." "The wise" and "they that understand" are in Hebrew the same word, the *maskilim*, and remind us again of certain psalms that are called *maskil* psalms, an important series of psalms in this connection, four of which (lii.-lv.) describe the wicked one of this time and his following; while the thirty-second speaks of forgiveness and a hiding-

and rich and poor, and free and bond, that they should give them a ^pmark on their right hand or upon their forehead; and that no one should be able to buy or sell, except he had the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath ^understanding count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a ^rman, and his number is ^six hundred sixty and six.

*p*ctr. ch.7.2.
3.
cf. ch. 14.9.
q *cf.* Dan.12.
10.
cf. 1 Cor. 2.
15.
r *cf.* Ps.9.20.
cf. Ps.10.18.
s *cf.* Dan.3.1.
cf. 1 Sam.
17. 4.

place in God, the forty-second comforts those cast out from the sanctuary, and the forty-fifth celebrates the victory of Christ and His reign and the submission of the nations. Again, the seventy-fourth pleads for the violated sanctuary; the seventy-eighth recites the many wanderings of the people from their God; the seventy-ninth is another mourning over the desolation of Jerusalem; the eighty-eighth bewails their condition under the broken law; and the eighty-ninth declares the sure mercies of David. The 142d is the only other maskil psalm.

Moll may well dispute Hengstenberg's assertion that these psalms are special instruction for the *Church*. On the other hand, the mere recital of them in this way may convince us that they furnish the very keynote to Israel's condition in the time of the end, and may well be used to give such instruction to the remnant amid the awful scenes of the great tribulation. In Revelation it will not be doubtful, I think, to those who attempt to consider it, that we have in this place a *nota bene* for the *maskilim*.

Can we say nothing, then, as to the number of the beast?

As to the individual application, certainly, I think, nothing. We cannot prophesy; and until the time comes, the vision in this respect is sealed up. The historical interpreters, for whom indeed there should be no seal if their interpretation be the whole of it, generally agree upon *Lateinos* (the Latin), which has, however, an *e* too much, and therefore would make but 661. Other words have been suggested, but it is needless to speak of them. The day will declare it.

Yet it does not follow but that there may be something for us in the number, of significance spiritually. The 6, thrice repeated, while it speaks of labor and not rest, of abortive effort after the divine 7, declares the evil at its highest to be limited and in God's hand. This number is but, after all, we are told, the number of a man—and what is man? He may multiply responsibility and judgment, but the Sabbath is God's rest, and sanctified to Him. Without God, man can have no Sabbath. Thus 666 is the number of a man who is but a beast and doomed.

With this picture in Revelation we are to connect the prophecies of Antichrist which we have elsewhere in the New Testament. The apostle John has shown us distinctly that he will deny the Father and the Son—the faith of Christianity, and (not that there *is* a Christ, but) *Jesus* as the Christ. He is thus distinctly identified with the unbelief of Israel, as he is impliedly an apostate from the Christian faith, in which character the apostle plainly speaks of him to the Thessalonians. He is a second Judas, the son of perdition, the ripe fruit of that "falling away" which was to come before the day of the Lord came—itsself the outcome of that "mystery of iniquity" (or "lawlessness") which from the beginning has been at work. He is the "wicked" or "lawless one"—not the sinful *woman*, the harlot of Revelation, but the "*man of sin*."

Every word here claims from us the closest attention. The sinful *woman* is still professedly subject to the man, though antichristian because in fact putting herself in Christ's place, claiming a power that is His alone. Nevertheless, she claims it in His name, not in her own. The pope assumes not to be Christ, but the vicar of Christ. The real "*man of sin*" throws off this womanly subjection. He is no vicar of Christ, but denies that Jesus is the Christ. He sits in the tem-

ple of God, showing himself that he is God. Yet even as Christ owns and brings men to worship the Father, so Antichrist brings men to worship another than himself, as Revelation has shown us. There is a terrible consistency about these separate predictions which thus confirm and supplement one another.

We see clearly that the temple in which he sits is not the Christian Church, but the Jewish temple, and how he is linked with the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel and by the Lord, an abomination which brings in the time of trouble, lasting until the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven as Saviour of Israel and of the world.

The "abomination" is mentioned three times in Daniel; the only place that is equivocal in its application to the last days being the eleventh chapter (ver. 31). The connection would refer it there to Antiochus Epiphanes, the Grecian oppressor of Israel, who, near the middle of the second century before Christ, profaned the temple with idolatrous sacrifices and impure rites. It is agreed by commentators in general that the whole of the previous part of the chapter details in a wonderful manner the strife of the Syrian and Egyptian kings, in the centre of which Judea lay. From this point on, however, interpreters differ widely. The attempt to apply the rest of the prophecy to Antiochus has been shown by Keil and others to be an utter failure. The time of trouble such as never was, yet which ends with the deliverance of the people (chap. xii. 1), corresponds exactly with that which is spoken of in the Lord's prophecy on the mount of Olives; and the time, times and a half, named in connection with the abomination of desolation, and which the book of Revelation again and again brings before us, are alone sufficient to assure us that we have here reached a period yet future to us to-day. The connection of all this becomes a matter of deepest interest.

That the whole present period of the Christian dispensation should be passed over in Old Testament prophecy is indeed not a thing new to us, and the knowledge of this makes the leap of so many centuries not incredible. If, however, the time, times and a half, or 1260 days from the setting up of the abomination, contemplate that abomination set up by Antiochus more than a century and a half before Christ, then the reckoning of the time is an utter perplexity. Yet, what other can be contemplated, when in all this prophecy there is none other referred to? To go back to chapters eight or nine to find such a reference, overlooking what is before our eyes, would seem out of the question. What other solution of the matter is possible?

Now we must remember that the book is shut up and sealed until the "time of the end," a term which has a recognized meaning in prophecy, and cannot apply to the times of Antiochus or to those of the Maccabees, which followed them. It assures us once more that the prophecy reaches on to the days of Matt. xxiv., and that the abomination of desolation there must be the abomination here. Yet, how can this be? Only, surely, in one way. If the application to Antiochus, while true, be only the partial and incipient fulfilment of that which looks on to the last days for its exhaustive one, then indeed all is reconciled, and the difficulty has disappeared. This, therefore, must be the real solution.

What we have here is only one example of that double fulfilment which many interpreters have long since found in Scripture prophecies, and of which the book of Revelation is the fullest and most extended. There may be a question as to how far the double fulfilment in this case reaches back. With this we have not here to do, for we are not primarily occupied with Daniel. It is sufficient for our purpose if we are entitled to take the abomination of desolation here (as it certainly appears that we are bound to take it) as in both places the same, and identical with that which we find in the New Testament.

Going on in the eleventh chapter, then, to the 36th verse, we find the picture of one who may well be the same as the second beast of Revelation. If at the

first look it might appear so, a further consideration, it is believed, will confirm the thought of this. Let us quote the description in full:

"And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the Desire of women, nor regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honor the god of forces, and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold and silver, and with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain."

If we take the prophecy as closely connected, at least from the 31st verse,—and we have seen that there seems a necessity for this,—then this king is described in his conduct after the abomination of desolation has been set up in the temple; and this strange and, it might seem, contradictory character that is ascribed to him would seem to mark him out sufficiently that he sets himself up above every god, and yet has a god of his own. This is exactly what is true of the antichristian second beast, and there can scarcely be another at such a time of whom it can be true. But let us look more closely.

First he is a king, and the place of his rule is clearly, by the connection, in the land of Israel. Thus he fills the identical position of the second beast. Then, he does according to his own will, is his own law, lawless, as in Thessalonians. His self-exaltation above every god naturally connects itself with blasphemy against the God of gods, spite of which he prospers till the indignation is accomplished, that is, the term of God's wrath against Israel; a determinate, decreed time. This is the secret of his being allowed to prosper; but God wills to use him as a rod of discipline to His people. Israel's sins give power to their adversaries.

The next verse intimates that he is a Jew himself, an apostate one, for he regards not the God of his fathers. It is not natural to apply this to any other than the true God, and then his ancestry is plain. Then, too, the "Desire of women," put here as among the objects of worship, is the Messiah promised as the woman's Seed. Thus his character comes still more clearly out. Yet, though exalting himself, he has a god of his own, the "god of forces," or "fortresses." And we have seen the second beast's object of worship is the first beast, a political idol, sought for the strength it gives, a worship compounded of fear and greed. Thus it is indeed a god whom his fathers knew not, none of the old gods of which the world has been so full, although the dark and dreadful power behind it is the same: the face is changed, but not the heart. Indeed, strongholds are his trust, and he practises against them with the help of this strange god. This seems the meaning of the sentence that follows: "And whosoever acknowledges him he will increase with glory, and cause him to rule over the multitude, and divide the land for gain." In all this we find what agrees perfectly with what is elsewhere stated as to the "man of sin." There are, no doubt, difficulties in interpreting this part of Daniel consistently all through, especially in the connection of the "king" here spoken of with the setting up of the abomination in the 31st verse; for it is the *king of the north* who there seems to inspire this; and the king of the north is throughout the chapter the Grecian king of Syria, and the part he plays is clearly that which Antiochus, the king of the north of his own time, did play. From this it is very natural that it should be conceived, as by some it is, that the king of the north and Antichrist are one. If this were so, it would not alter anything that has been said as to the application of the prophecy thus far, although there might be a difficulty as to a Grecian prince becoming a Jewish false Christ.

But there is no need for this, nor any reason, that one can see, why the perpetration of the awful wickedness in connection with Jehovah's sanctuary should not be the work of more than even the two beasts of Revelation. It is certainly

SUBDIVISION 4. (Chap. xiv.)

The earth-change at hand.

1 (1. 5): The King on Zion, and those identified with Him.

1. **A**ND I saw, and behold, the 'Lamb standing upon mount Zion, and with him a "hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name and his Father's name "written upon their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of heaven as a voice of "many waters, and as a voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as of "harpers harping with their harps; and they sing

t ch. 5. 6.
ctr. ch. 13.
11.
cf. Rom. 11
26.
u ch. 7. 4.
cf. Rom. 9.
27.
v ch. 7. 3.
cf. ch. 22. 4.
ctr. ch. 13
16.
w ch. 19. 6.
x cf. ch. 15. 2.

striking that in chapter eight, where the rise of this latter-day Grecian power is depicted, the taking away of the daily sacrifice is linked in some way with his magnifying himself against the Prince of the host (ver. 11). It cannot be positively asserted that it is done by him, (as most translators and interpreters, however, give it,) yet the connection is so natural, one might almost say inevitable, that had we this passage alone, all would take it so. How much more would one think so when the eleventh chapter seems so entirely to confirm this! Let it be remembered that Greece was one of the provinces of the Roman empire, and as such would seem to be subject to it upon its revival, whether or not the bond with it be broken before the end. Why not a combination of powers and motives in the commission of this last blasphemous crime, even as in the cross Jew and Gentile were linked together? The instrument is, no doubt, the anti-christian power in Judea, but the Grecian power may, none the less, have its full part, and both of these be in subordination to the head of the western empire.

SUBD. 4.

We have now a section which seems designed to put together in review the various acts of God in view of the change which is at hand, whether these be in blessing or in judgment. There is mercy, as ever, while yet the world is in its special trial, and evil is fully searched out and under the hand of God.

1. The manifestation of evil is complete. We are now to see God's dealings as to it. These acts of Satan and his ministers are a plain challenge of *all* His rights in Israel and the earth; and further patience would be no longer patience, but dishonor. Hence we find now, as if in answer to the challenge, the *Lamb upon mount Zion*, that is, upon David's seat; and as the beast-followers have his mark upon them, so the followers of Christ, associated with Him here, have His and His Father's name upon their foreheads. What this means can scarcely be mistaken.

Zion is not only identified in Scripture with David and his sovereignty, but very plainly with the sovereign grace of God, when everything entrusted to man had failed in Israel—priesthood had broken down, the ark gone into captivity in the enemy's land, and although restored by the judgment of God upon the Philistines, it was no more sought unto in the days of Saul, who, though Jehovah's anointed king, had become apostate. All might seem to have gone, but it was not so, and in this extremity, as the seventy-eighth psalm says, "The Lord awoke as one out of sleep. . . . And He smote His adversaries backwards. Moreover, He refused the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah—the mount Zion which He loved. . . . He chose also David His servant." Nor was this a temporary choice, as a later psalm adds: "For Jehovah hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation. Here is My rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (Psa. cxxxii. 13, 14).

Thus, though the long interval of so many centuries may seem to argue repentance upon God's part, it is not really so. "God is not man, that He should lie; nor the son of man, that He should repent." The Lamb on Zion shows us

as it were a "new song before the throne and "before the four living beings and the elders; and "no one was able to learn the song except the hundred and forty and four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they that were ^bnot defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who ^cfollow the Lamb wherever he goeth. These were ^dpurchased from among men, ^efirst-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no ^ffalsehood, for* they are ^gwithout blame.

y cf. ch. 5. 9.
cf. Ps. 33. 2,
3.
z cf. ch. 5. 11.
a cf. ch. 2. 17.
b cf. 2 Cor. 11.
2.
ctr. ch. 17. 1.
c cf. ch. 17.
14.
d cf. ch. 1. 5,
6.
e cf. Jas. 1.
18.
cf. Jer. 2. 3.
f cf. Is. 63. 8.
ctr. 1 Jno.
2. 22.

* Some omit, "for."

g cf. Num. 23. 21.

the true David on the covenanted throne, and Zion by this lifted up, indeed, above the hills. The vision is of course anticipative; for by and by we find that the beast still exists. The end is put first, as it is with Him who sees it from the beginning, and then we trace the steps that lead up to it. With this method all will be familiar who are familiar with the Psalms.

But who are the 144,000 associated with the Lamb? Naturally, one would at once identify them with the similar number sealed out of the twelve tribes in the seventh chapter; and the more so, that the Lamb's and His Father's name upon their foreheads is surely the effect of this very sealing which was upon the forehead also. No other mark is given us as to them in the former vision, save that we read of them as exempted from the power of the locusts afterwards. Here, if it is not directly affirmed that they are sealed, yet it seems evident, a seal having been often a stamp with a name, and the purpose of the sealing in the former case being a mark they had as God's. This is manifestly accomplished by His name upon them. This open identification with Christ in the day of His rejection might seem to be just what would expose them to all the power of the enemy. Yet it is this which, in fact, marks them for security. In reality, what a protection is the open confession of Christ as the One we serve! There is no safer place for us than that of necessary conflict under the Lord's banner; and the end is glory. Here they stand, then, these confessors openly confessed by Him on His side; and their having been through the suffering and the conflict is just that which brings them here upon the mount of royalty. It is, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

Another inestimable privilege they have got, (though clearly an earthly, not a heavenly company) they are able to learn a song that is sung in heaven: "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard was of harpers harping with their harps; and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living beings and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the 144,000 that were purchased from the earth."

It is clear that the company here occupy a place analogous to that of the Gentile multitude of the seventh chapter, who there stand before the throne and the living ones also. The vision in either case being anticipative, we can understand that earth and heaven are at this time brought near together, and that "standing" before the throne and "singing" before the throne involve no necessary heavenly place for those who sing or stand there. Here, they stand upon mount Zion, while they sing before the throne—that is, if the singers are primarily the 144,000, as many think. What seems in opposition to this is that the voice is heard from heaven, and that the company on mount Zion are spoken of as learners of the song. On the other side, the difficulty is in answering the question, Who are these harpers? plainly human ones, who are distinguished from the elders, yet in heaven at this time. Remembering what the time is, may help us here. May they not be the martyrs of the period with which the prophecy in general has to do—those seen when the fourth seal is opened, and those

2 (6-11):
The earth-
gospel.
1 (6, 7): The
everlasting
kingdom
coming.

2. ¹ And I saw ^aanother* angel flying in mid-heaven, having the 'everlasting gospel to announce to those dwelling upon the earth, and to 'every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice,

* Some omit, "another."

h vers. 8, 9.
ctr. Matt. 4.
23.
ctr. 1 Cor.
15. 1-4.
i cf. Gen. 3.
15 with ch.
22. 17.
j Lk. 24. 47.

for whom they are bidden to wait—the sufferers under the beast afterward? two classes which will be seen as completing the ranks of the first resurrection in the twentieth chapter. Those here would give us a third class evidently, neither the heavenly elders nor the sealed ones of Israel, and yet in closest sympathy with the latter. It could not be thought strange that the 144,000 here should be able to learn their song, and at the time when the Lamb is King on Zion this third class would certainly be found filling such a place as that of the harpers here. This seems indeed to meet the difficulty; for their song would clearly be a new song such as neither the Old Testament nor the revelation of the Church-mystery could account for, while the living victors over the beast would seem rightly here to enter into the song of others, rather than themselves to originate it.

But they have their own peculiar place as on mount Zion, first fruits of earth's harvest to God and to the Lamb, purchased from among men, (grace, through the blood of Christ, the secret of their blessing, as of all other,) but answering to that claim in a true, undefiled condition, in virgin-faithfulness to Him who is afresh espousing Israel to Himself. In their mouth, thus, no lie is found, for they are blameless, and these last words we shall surely read aright when we remember that to those who have not received the love of the truth God will send strong delusion, that they may believe *the* lie (2 Thess. ii. 11), and the apostle's question, "Who is *the* liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" and that "he is the antichrist who denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John ii. 22). The names of the Lamb and of His Father are on the foreheads of these sealed ones.

2. We have now the earth-gospel, which we need not wonder to be in some sense a gospel of judgment. Thus the denunciative woe upon the beast-followers, as well as the announcement of the fall of Babylon, may enter into it, for these are the necessary clearing of the earth from the power of evil which oppresses it. The everlasting gospel is in terms accordant to this: "Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment is come."

¹ It is the foregleam of the day that comes that the first vision of this chapter shows us; but although the time is coming fast, we are first to see the harbingers of judgment, and then the judgment, before it can in fact arrive. Righteousness unheeded when it spoke in grace must speak in judgment, that the work of righteousness may be "peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." In this way it is that we come now to what seems to us, perhaps, who have one of so much higher character, a strange, sad gospel, and yet the everlasting one which an angel flying in midheaven preaches to the inhabitants of the earth. How any one could confound this gospel of judgment with the gospel of salvation by the cross, would seem hard to understand, except as we realize how utterly the difference of dispensations has been ignored in common teaching, and how it is taken as a matter of course that the "gospel" must be always one and the same gospel, which even the epithet "everlasting" is easily taken to prove. Does it not indeed assert it, that the same gospel was preached, of course in a clearer or less clear fashion, all through the dispensation of law, and before it?

No doubt the everlasting gospel must be that which from the beginning was preached and has been preached ever since, although it should be plain that the "hour of His judgment is come" is just what with truth no one in Christian times could say. Plain it is, too, that the command to worship God the Creator

2 (8):
Babylon
fallen.

¹ Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his ¹ judgment is come; and worship him that ² made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the fountains of waters.

² And ² another angel followed, a second, saying, ³ Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen, which hath made all nations to ² drink of the wine of the ² fury of her fornication.

k ch. 15. 4.
l cf. ch. 11. 14.
m ch. 4. 11.
n ver. 6.
o ch. 18. 2.
Jer. 51. 8.
Is. 21. 9.
p cf. Jer. 51.
7.
q ch. 18. 3, 9.

is not what any one who knew the gospel could take as that now. In fact, the gospel element, the glad tidings in the angel message, is just found in that which seems most incongruous with it to-day—that the “hour of His judgment is come.” What else in it is tidings at all? That certainly is; and if serious, yet to those who know that just in this way deliverance is to come for the earth, it is simple enough that the coming of the delivering judgment is in fact the gospel.

Listen to that same gospel as a preacher of old declared it. With what rapture of exultation does he break out as he cries, “O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth; sing unto the Lord, bless His name, show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples. . . . Tremble before Him all the earth. Say among the nations that the Lord reigneth, the world also is established that it cannot be moved. He shall judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; let the field exult, and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the woods sing for joy before the Lord; for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth” (Psa. xvi.). Here is a gospel before Christianity, and which has been sounding out all through Christianity, whether men have heard it or not. This, too, is the echo of what we hear in Eden before the gate of the first paradise shuts upon the fallen and guilty pair, that the Seed of the woman should crush the serpent’s head. That is a gospel which has been ringing through the ages since, which may well be called the everlasting one. Its form is only altered by the fact that now at last its promise is to be fulfilled. “Judgment” is to “return to righteousness.” The rod is iron, but henceforth in the Shepherd’s hand. Man’s day is passed; the day of the Lord is come, and every blow inflicted shall be on the head of evil, the smiting down of sorrow and of all that brings it. What can he be but rebel-hearted who shall refuse to join the anthem when the King-Creator comes unto His own again? The angel-evangel is thus a claim for worship from all people, and to Him that cometh every knee shall bow.

We must not imagine that the “angel” here is necessarily this. God’s way is to speak by human messengers, and He will doubtless do it at the time we are considering. Those brethren of the Lord whom He owns as such at the time when judgment separates the sheep from the goats, and by the conduct towards whom the condition of men is judged then, are doubtless these very preachers, who are Israelitish as suits the time, and as the “brethren” of the Lord speaks them to be. It is according to the words in Micah, where he speaks of “the remnant of His brethren” returning unto the children of Israel. The passage has been elsewhere examined.

² That the message of judgment is indeed a gospel we find plainly in the next announcement, which is marked as that of a second angel, the third following, similar in character, as we shall see directly. Here it is announced that Babylon the Great has fallen: before, indeed, her picture has been presented to us, which we find only in the seventeenth chapter. The name itself is, however, significant as that of Israel’s great enemy, under whose power she lay prostrate seventy years, and itself derived from God’s judgment upon an old confederation, the seat of which became afterward the centre of Nimrod’s empire; but that was not Babylon the Great, although human historians would have given

³ (9-11):
The cup
filled for
those on
whom is
the sign of
the beast.

³ And ⁴another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any one ⁵worshipeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark upon his forehead or upon his hand, he shall even ⁶'drink of the wine of the fury of God, which is mixed, unadulterated, in the cup of his wrath; and he shall be ⁷"tormented with fire and brimstone in the ⁸"presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up to the ⁹"ages of ages, and they have ¹⁰"no rest day and night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

r vers. 6, 8.
s ctr. ch. 13.
17.

t ch. 16. 19.
cf. Jer. 25.
15.
u cf. ch. 20.
10.
v cf. Is. 66. 23,
24.
cf. 2 Thess.
1. 9.
w cf. ch. 19. 3.
cf. Mk. 9. 48.
x ctr. cp. 4. 8.

her, no doubt, the palm. With God she was only the type of a power more arrogant and evil and defiant of Him than the old Chaldean despot, and into whose hands the Church of Christ has fallen—the heavenly, not the earthly people. It is an old history rehearsed in a new sphere, and with other names—a new witness of the unity of man morally in every generation.

The sin on account of which it falls reminds us still of Babylon, while it has also its peculiar aggravation. Of her of old it was said, "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand that made all the earth drunken. All nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad" (Jer. li. 7). But it is not said the "wine of the fury of her fornication." This latter expression shows that Babylon is not here a mere political, but a spiritual power. One who belongs professedly to Christ has prostituted herself to the world for the sake of power. She has inflamed the nations with unholy principles which act upon men's passions easily stirred, as we have seen in fact in Rome. By such means she has gained and retained power. By such, after centuries of change, she holds it still. But the time is at hand when they will at last fail her, and this is what the angel declares now to have come. Babylon is fallen, and that fall is final. It is the judgment of God upon her. It is retributive justice for centuries of corruption; it is a note of the everlasting gospel which claims the earth for God and announces its deliverance from its oppressors, but we have yet only the announcement. The details will be given in due place.

¹ A third angel follows, noted as that, and belonging therefore to the company of those that bring the gospel of blessing for the earth. That it comes in the shape of a woe we have seen to be in no wise against this. Babylon is not the only evil which must perish that Christ may reign; and Babylon's removal only makes way at first for the full development of another form of it more openly blasphemous than this. The woman makes way for the man: what professes at least subjection to Christ, for that which is in open revolt against Him. Here, therefore, the woe threatened is far more sweeping and terrible than in the former case. There are people of God who come out of Babylon, and who therefore were in her to come out (chap. xviii. 4); but the beast in its final form insures the perdition of all who follow it: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, he shall even drink of the wine of the fury of God which is mixed, unadulterated, in the cup of His wrath, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up to the ages of ages, and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

It is the beast who destroys Babylon, after having for a time supported her. His own pretension tolerates no divided allegiance, and in him the unbelief of a world culminates in self-worship. Here God's mercy can only take the form of cold and emphatic threatening of extreme penalty for those who worship the beast.

3 (12, 13):
The heav-
enly
gospel.

3. Here is the ¹patience of the saints—those who keep the ²commandments of God and the ³faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice out of heaven saying, Write, ⁴Blessed are the dead who die in [the] Lord ⁵from henceforth. Yea, ⁶saith the Spirit, that they may ⁷rest from their labors; for their ⁸works follow with them.

c cf. Ps. 55. 6-8; cf. Matt. 24. 9. d cf. ch. 2. 29. e cf. ch. 6. 11; cf. 2 Thess. 1. 7, 8. f cf. Phil. 1. 23. g cf. Heb. 6. 10; cf. 2 Cor. 5. 10.

y ch. 13. 10. z ch. 12. 17. cf. ch. 22. 9. a cf. Mk. 13. 13. cf. Jas. 2. 1. b cfr. 1 Cor. 15. 51. cf. Phil. 1. 23. f cf. Heb. 6.

In proportion to the fearful character of the evil does the Lord give open assurance of the doom upon it, so that no one may unknowingly incur it. Here "the patience of the saints" is sustained during a "reign of terror" such as has never yet been.

3. Faith, too, is sustained in another way, namely, by the special consolation as to those who die as martyrs at this time: "And I heard a voice out of heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord *from henceforth*." That is plainly encouragement under peculiar circumstances. All who die in the Lord must be blessed at any time, but that only makes it plainer that the circumstances must be exceptional now which require such comfort to be so expressly provided for them. Something must have produced a question as to the blessedness of those who die at this time; and in this we have an incidental confirmation—stronger because incidental—that *the resurrection of the saints has already taken place*. Were they still waiting to be raised, the blessedness of those who as martyrs joined their company could scarcely be in doubt; but the resurrection having taken place, and the hope of believers being now to enter alive into the kingdom of the Son of man at His appearing, (as the Lord says of that time, "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved"—Matt. xxiv. 14.) the question is necessarily raised. What shall be the portion of these martyrs, then, must not remain a question; and in the tenderness of divine love the answer is here explicitly given. Specially blessed are those who die from henceforth. They rest from their labors. They go to their reward. The Spirit seals this with a sweet confirming "yea"—so it is. Earth has only cast them out that heaven may receive them; they have suffered, therefore they shall reign with Christ. Thus, accordingly, we find in the twentieth chapter that when the thrones are set and filled, those that have suffered under the beast are shown as rising from the dead to reign with the rest of those who reign with Him. Not the martyrs in general, but *these of this special time*, are marked distinctly as finding acknowledgment and blessing in that first resurrection from which it might have seemed that they were shut out altogether. It may help some to see how similar was the difficulty that had to be met with the Thessalonian saints, and which the apostle meets also with a special "word of the Lord" in the first epistle. They also were looking for the Lord, so that the language of their hearts was, with that of the apostle, "*we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord*." They had been "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven;" and with a lively and expectant faith they waited. But then, what about those who were fallen asleep in Christ? It is evident that here is all their difficulty. He would not have them ignorant concerning those that were asleep, so as to be sorrowing for them, hopeless as to their share of blessing in that day. Nay; those who remained would not go before these sleeping ones. *They would rise first*; and those who were alive would then be "caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air." This for Christians now is the authoritative word of comfort. But the sufferers under the beast would not find this sufficient for *them*. For them the old difficulty appears once more, and must be met with a new revelation. How perfect and congruous in all its parts is the precious word of God! and how plainly we have, instead of what might seem an obscure or strange expression,—"blessed *from henceforth*,"—a confirmation of the general interpretation of all

4 (14-16):
The
harvest.

4. And I saw, and behold, a white ^gcloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like a ^hSon of man, having upon his head a golden ^{crown}, and in his hand [the] ^jsharp sickle. And ^kanother angel came out of the temple, ^lcrying with a loud voice to him that sat upon the cloud, Put ^{*}forth thy sickle and reap; for the ^mhour is come to reap, because the harvest of the earth is dried.† And he that sat upon the cloud thrust his sickle upon the earth, and the ⁿearth was reaped.

g ch. 1. 7.
h Matt. 24. 30.
i cf. Matt. 26. 64.
ctr. 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17.
j cf. ch. 19. 12.
k cf. Mk. 4. 29.
l vers. 6, 9.
m cf. Joel 3. 13.
n cf. Jer. 51. 33.
ctr. Jno. 4. 35, 36.
o cf. Matt. 13. 30, 36-43.
p cf. Lk. 8. 17.
q vers. 6, 8, 9.
r cf. ch. 8. 3.
s cf. ch. 16. 5, 8.
t cf. ver. 15.
u cf. Isa. 5. 1-7.
v cf. Matt. 21. 33-41.
w cf. 2 Thess. 2. 7-12.

5 (17-20):
The vint-
age.

5. And ^oanother angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, having himself also a sharp sickle. And ^panother angel came out from the altar, having ^qauthority over fire; and he spake with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, ^rPut forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the ^svine of the earth; for her grapes are ^tfully ripe. And the angel

* Literally, "send."

† That is, more than ripe. God's full long-suffering has been manifested.

this part of Revelation! The historical interpretation, however true as a partial, anticipatory fulfilment, fails here in finding any just solution.

4. In the next vision the judgment falls. The Son of man upon the cloud, the harvest, the treading of the wine-press, are all familiar to us from other scriptures, and in connection with the appearing of the Lord. We need have no doubt, therefore, as to what is before us here. The harvest naturally turns us back to our Lord's parable where the wheat and tares represent the mingled aspect of the kingdom, the field of Christendom. Tares are not the fruit of the gospel, but the enemy's work, who sows not the truth of God, but an imitation of it. The tares are thus the children of the wicked one, deniers of Christ, though professing Christians. The harvest brings the time of separation. First the tares are gathered and bound in bundles for the burning; but along with this, the wheat is gathered into the barn. In the interpretation afterwards we have a fuller thing. The tares are cast into the fire, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in their Father's kingdom.

Here, the general idea of harvest would be the same; but it does not follow that it will be necessarily identical with that in the gospel. In fact, this could scarcely be. The wheat is, at the time which we are considering, already reaped in that case, and in the barn. The field is that sown in the generations passing, by the gospel; but the parable of the sheep and goats shows us that there will yet be discriminative judgment; thus a harvest, where that which is for God is gathered in, as well as what He cannot own cast away. The idea is general, and we do not seem able more to particularize. In what follows there is no further discrimination, but judgment pure and simple.

5. Thus, in the vintage, the grapes are cast wholly into the great wine-press of the wrath of God; and thus it is the angel out of the altar who has power over the fire, at whose word it comes. The vine of the earth is a figure suitable to Israel as God's vine (Isa. v.), but now apostate. Yet it cannot be confined to Israel, as is plain from the connection in which we find it elsewhere, but it represents in any case an apostasy, and thus what we have seen to have its centre at Jerusalem, though involving Gentiles also, far and near. Thus the city, outside of which the wine-press is trodden, is Jerusalem, as the 1600 furlongs is well known to be the length of Palestine. Blood flows up to the bits of the horses for that distance—of course a figure, but a terrible one.

Both figures, the harvest and the vintage, are used in Joel with reference to this time: "Proclaim ye this among the nations; prepare war; stir up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your

thrust his sickle to the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great "winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden "without the city, and there came blood out of the winepress unto the bits of the horses for a "thousand six hundred furlongs.

u ch. 19. 15.
cf. Is. 63. 1-6.
v *cf.* Heb. 13.
12.
w *cf.* Is. 8. 8.

plowshares into swords and your pruning-hooks into spears : let the weak say, I am strong. Haste ye and come, all ye nations round about, and gather yourselves together ; hither cause Thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the nations bestir themselves and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread ye, for the wine-press is full, the vats overflow ; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining ; and the Lord shall roar upon Zion and utter His voice upon Jerusalem, and the heaven and the earth shall shake : but the Lord will be a refuge unto His people and a stronghold to the children of Israel."

Thus comes the final blessing, and the picture upon which the eye rests at last is a very different one. "So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain : then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord and water the valley of Shittim. . . . And I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed ; for the Lord dwelleth in Zion."

SUBD. 5.

The visions of the last chapter plainly reach to the end of judgment in the coming of the Lord Himself. The vials, or bowls, therefore, cannot come after these or go beyond them. In fact, the coming of the Lord is not openly reached in them, though it may seem implied, for in the bowls is filled up the wrath of God. But the coming of the Lord, though necessary to complete the judgment, is yet so much more than judgment, that it would seem even out of place in a bowl of wrath. In the fourteenth chapter, where it is the Lamb's answer to the challenge of the enemy, He does indeed appear. The manifestation of Antichrist is met by the manifestation of Christ, as the day antagonizes and chases away the night; but the day then is come. In the bowls there is simply the destruction of the evil; and while the previous visions classify in a divine way the objects of wrath, the bowls give us rather the history in detail—the succession of events; though this, of course, like all else, has moral purpose and a divine meaning in it. All history has. The difficulty in common history, is to get the facts distinctly and in proportion, which the inspiration of Scripture-history secures for us. But along with this we have here what is obscured so much to men, heaven's action in earth's history; and heaven is acting in a more direct manner, now that the end is at hand, and the wrath stored up for many generations is to burst upon the earth at last. God would evidently have us to consider in detail His acts of judgment, which are at the same time the manifestation of the character of that which procures them all; all these having thus their special interest for us. God would not otherwise occupy us with that which is to Him ever a strange work, something foreign to His heart. But if it be a necessary thing to Him, the moral of it must be to us necessary, not merely for our conduct here upon earth, amongst the things which are to call forth His judgment, but, no question, in heaven itself also, when there will be thoroughly perfected that discernment of good and evil in which God is now training us.

SUBDIVISION 5. (Chaps. xv., xvi.)

The bowls of the wrath of God.

SECTION 1. (Chap. xv.)

The unity of righteousness in the King of Ages.

AND I saw ^aanother sign in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues, the last, for in them is ^vcompleted the indignation of God. And I saw as it were a ^asea of glass, mingled with ^afire; and those that had gained the ^bvictory over the beast and over his ^cimage and over the number of his name, standing upon the sea of glass, having ^dharps of God. And they sing the ^esong of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the ^fLamb, saying, ^gGreat and wonderful are thy works, Lord God Almighty; ^hrighteous and true are thy ways, O ⁱKing of Ages.* Who shall not ^jfear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art ^kholy; ^l† for all nations shall come and ^mworship before thee, because thy righteous acts have been made manifest. And after these things I saw, and the ⁿtemple‡ of the tabernacle of witness was opened in heaven: and there came out of the temple the seven ^oangels who

x cf. ch. 12. 1, 3.
y ch. 16. 17.
cf. ch. 10. 6, 7.
z ch. 4. 6.
chr 2 Chro. 4. 2 6.
a cf. 1 Pet. 1. 7.
b ch. 12. 11.
c ch. 13. 15.
cf. Dan. 3. 17, 18, 27-30.
d cf. ch. 5. 8.
cf. Ps. 150. 3.
e cf. Ex. 15. 1, etc.
cf. Deut. 32. 1, etc.
f cf. Ps. 22. 22.
g Deut. 32. 3, 4.
Ps. 92. 5.
cf. Rom. 11. 33.
h ch. 16. 7.
i 1 Tim. 1. 17.
j cf. Jer. 10. 7.
ch. 14. 7.
k ch. 4. 8.
l Ps. 86. 9.
cf. Is. 45. 23.
m cf. ch. 11. 19.
n ver. 1.
cf. ch. 5. 1.
cf. ch. 8. 6.

* The reading is disputed: some read, "King of saints," and others, "King of nations"; the R. V. has as above.

† Ὁ ἅγιος, not ὁ ἁγίος. ‡ Ναός, the sanctuary itself.

Sec. 1.

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful—seven angels having seven plagues, the last, for in them is completed the indignation of God."

The one bright word here is "COMPLETED." For the earth at large, it is indeed so. Judgment comes, as we shall see at the close of the Millennium, upon a special, though, alas, numerous class; but it is nevertheless not the earth that rebels, nor can the Hand that holds the sceptre be any more displaced. How the voice of the everlasting gospel sounds in that word "completed"! But in proportion as the judgment is final now, so must it be complete, conclusive. All limitations are now removed. The rod of iron thoroughly does its work. As in the Lord's answer to His disciples' question as to this very period, "Where-soever the carcass"—the corruption that provokes God's anger—"is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

But first,—and this is the style of prophecy, as we have seen,—before the judgment strikes, the gathering clouds are for a moment parted, that we may see, not the whole good achieved, but the care of God over His own, who in this scene might seem to have found only defeat and forsaking. One righteous Man alone ever *was* really forsaken. And we are permitted to see how, in fact, He has but hidden in His own pavilion, from the strife of men, those who amid the battle drop down and are lost. The sea of glass in the vision answers to the brazen sea in the temple of old—the laver; but here it is glass, not water. Purification is over, with the need of it. The fire mingled with it indicates what those here have passed through, which God has used for blessing to their souls. They are a special class, martyrs under the beast, no doubt, who have found victory in defeat, and are perfected and at rest before the throne of God.

They sing a mingled song, the song of Moses and of the Lamb—conquerors like those who were delivered out of Egypt, but by the might of Him who goes forth as a "man of war" for the deliverance of His people. The song of the Lamb looks to the victories recorded in this book, in which the "works" of the

had the seven plagues, ° clothed with pure bright linen, and ° girt about the breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four ° living beings gave to the seven angels seven golden ° bowls, full of the ° indignation of God, who liveth to the ages of ages. And the temple was ° filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

SECTION 2. (Chap. xvi.)

The wrath poured out.

1 (1, 2):
First bowl.
The inward truth
becoming
knowledge.

1. AND I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the indignation of God upon the earth. And the

o cf. ch. 19. 8, 14.
p cf. ch. 1. 13.
q cf. ch. 4. 6.
r cf. ch. 5. 8.
s cf. ch. 14. 10.
cf. Jer. 25. 15.
t Ex. 40. 34, 35.
Is. 6. 4.
1KI 8. 10, 11

u ch. 14. 15, 18.
cf. Ps. 79. 6.

Lord God Almighty of the Old Testament are repeated by Him who, as King of the ages, manifests thus His ways as true and righteous throughout the dispensations.

Divine promises are being fulfilled. God is once more taking up the cause of His ancient people, while the sufferers in Christian times are no less being vindicated and their enemies judged. He has not slept when most He seemed to do so, and now acts in judgment that makes all men fear. Ripened iniquity, come to a head wherever we may look, claims the harvest-sickle. The open challenge of the enemy brooks no delay in answering it. It is the only hope for the earth itself, which will learn righteousness when His judgments are in it, while the New Testament here coalesces with the voice of prophecy in the Old, and the cycle of the ages is completed, and returns into itself, only with a *Second Man*, a new creation, and the paradise of God. Truly Christ is "King of the ages."

And now the temple of the tabernacle of testimony is opened in heaven, where the ark of the covenant has been already seen. Faithful to that covenant now, in which Israel and the earth are together ordained to blessing, the seven angels with the seven last plagues issue forth as the result of that faithfulness. Thus they are arrayed in pure white linen, and girded with golden girdles. It is the glory of God in behalf of which they serve, as the bowls are also golden and filled with His wrath. From the glory of God and from His power smoke fills the temple. None can therefore approach to intercede. There can be no more delay. Long-suffering patience is exhausted. "No one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed."

Sec. 2.

The bowls of wrath are now poured out upon the earth at the bidding of a great voice from the temple. The wrath of God is no mere ebullition of passion that carries away the subject of it. It waits the word from the sanctuary, and at length that eventful word is spoken. Completing the divine judgments, the range of the bowls is not narrower than that of the prophetic earth; and in this they differ from the trumpet-series which otherwise they much resemble. Another resemblance, which is significant, is to the plagues of Egypt, which were at once a testimony to the world and for the deliverance of Israel. Israel is here, also, in her last crisis of trouble, and waiting for deliverance for which these judgments, no doubt, prepare the way, though that which alone accomplishes it—the coming of the Lord—is not plainly included.

1. The first bowl is poured out, distinctively in contrast with the sea and rivers afterwards, upon the earth, like the last trumpet-judgment; but the effect is different. Instead of hail and fire burning up the trees and grass, an evil and grievous sore breaks out upon those that have the mark of the beast and who worship his image. In Egypt such a plague routed their wise men, so that they

2 (3): Second bowl.
"As the blood of a dead man."

3 (4-7): Third bowl. The springs of natural satisfaction yielding death.

"first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and there came an evil and grievous sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

2. And the "second poured out his bowl upon the sea, and it became blood as of a "dead man, and every living soul died, [even] things that are in the sea.

3. And the "third poured out his bowl upon the °rivers and °springs of waters, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Thou art °righteous, who art and who wast, the holy * one, because thou hast judged thus; for they have °shed the blood

*"O6105.

v cf. ch. 6.1, etc.
cf. ch. 8. 7.
w cf. Ex.9.9-11.
cf. Is. 1. 6.
a cf. ch. 6.3,4.
cf. ch. 8.8,9.
y cf. ch. 17.15.
z cf. Ps.53.1-3.
a cf. ch. 6 5,6.
cf. ch. 8.10,11.
b cf. Ex.7.17-21.
c cf. Rom.3.3-6.
d cf. ch. 18.24.
cf. Matt.23.35.

could not stand before Moses. According to the natural meaning of such a figure, it would speak of inward corruption which is made now to appear outwardly in what is painful, loathsome and disfiguring; those who had accepted the beast's mark being those otherwise marked and branded with what is a sign of their moral condition. As the apostle shows (Rom. i.), idolatry is itself the sign of a corruption which would degrade God into creature-semblance in order to give free rein to its lusts. Here it is openly the worship of the image, of him whom Scripture stamps as the "beast," which those branded with his mark give themselves up to. The excesses of the French Revolution, when God was dethroned to make way for a prostitute on the altar of Notre Dame, if they be not, as some have thought them, the fulfilment of this bowl, may yet picture to us how it may be fulfilled in a time of trouble such as never was before, and, thank God, such as never will be afterwards.

The inward evil working to the surface becomes at the same time its manifestation and its punishment, although there be much more than this to come.

2. The second bowl is poured out on the sea, and the sea becomes like the blood of a dead man, and every living soul dies in the sea. Here we have the second trumpet in its effect upon the sea, but without the limitation which we find there, and there seems a difference also in that the blood is as that of a dead man. It cannot be that it is merely *dead blood*, for all blood shed becomes that almost at once, and the sea turned into blood would by itself suggest death without the addition. Would it not rather seem to be that the blood of a dead man, while it is indeed dead blood, is just that which has not been shed? Life has not been violently taken, but lost, either through disease or natural decay. Thus in the law, that which had died of itself was forbidden as food, because it spoke of internal corruption; as the life still vigorous when the blood was shed, did not. If this thought be the true one, then the state imaged under the second bowl is not that of strife and bloodshed among the nations, but of all spiritual life gone, which the addition, "every living soul died in the sea," affirms as complete. Life there might be in hunted and outlawed men, no longer recognized as part of the nations; but the mass was dead. This seems to give consistently the full force of the expression.

3. The third bowl is poured out upon the rivers and fountains of waters, the sphere affected by the third trumpet; but in the trumpet they are made bitter. Now they become blood, which, as owned to be the judgment of God upon persecutors, seems clearly to speak of bloodshed. They are given to all to drink. Where naturally there should be only sources of refreshment, as perhaps in family life, there are found instead strife and the hand of violence. The angel of the waters may in this case be the representative of that tender care of the Creator over the creature-life, but which in this case comes to be against the persecutor, and applauds His judgments; as the altar does, upon which the lives of the martyrs have been poured out to God.

4 (8, 9): The fourth bowl. The failure of mercy.
5 (10, 11): Fifth bowl. Retributive darkness.
6 (12-16): Sixth bowl. The full manifestation of evil, but with God's hand upon it, and the coming of the Lord, its limit, nearing.

of saints and of prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they are 'worthy. And I heard the 'altar saying, Yea, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

4. And the 'fourth poured out his bowl upon the ^asun, and it was given to it to 'scorch men with fire; and men were scorched with great scorching, and 'blasphemed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues; and 'repented not to give him glory.

5. And the 'fifth poured out his bowl upon the ^mthrone of the beast, and his kingdom became "darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they 'blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores; and 'repented not of their works.

6. And the 'sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river ^rEuphrates; and its water was dried up, that the

cf. Eph. 4. 19. q cf. ch. 6. 12-17; cf. ch. 9. 13-21. r cf. 1 Chron. 18. 3.

*e ctr. ch. 5. 12.
f cf. ch. 6. 9.
cf. ch. 8. 5.
g cf. ch. 6. 7. 8.
cf. ch. 8. 12.
h ctr. Mal. 4. 2.
i ctr. Ps. 121. 6.
j vers. 11. 21.
k cf. ch. 2. 21.
ch. 9. 20. 21.
l cf. ch. 6. 9-11.
cf. ch. 9. 1-11.
m ch. 13. 1. 2.
cf. ch. 2. 13.
n cf. Ex. 10. 21-23.
cf. Jno. 12. 35.
o vers. 9. 21.
ctr. Heb. 12. 11.
p ver. 9.*

4. The fourth angel pours out his bowl upon the sun, and it scorches men with its heat; but they only blaspheme God's name, and repent not. Here, as in general, the head of civil authority seems to be represented, and Napoleon's career has been taken, as in the historical application, to be the fulfilment of it. In him, after the immorality, apostasy and bloodshed of that memorable revolution, imperial power blazed out in destructive fierceness that might well be symbolized as scorching heat. There was splendor enough, but it was not "a pleasant sight to behold the sun:" the nation over which he ruled was oppressed with "glory," and soon manifested how its vitality had been exhausted by its hothouse growth. His career was brief; and briefer still, in proportion to its intensity, will be the closing despotism, which will be followed by the kingdom of the Son of man, and the display of a true glory unseen by the world before. Then shall that be fulfilled which is written: "The sun shall not smite thee by day," and how great will be the joy of this that is added: "thy Sun shall no more go down; . . . the Lord shall be thine everlasting light" (Isa. lx. 20).

5. The fifth bowl is poured out, and the meteoric blaze is passed. Poured on the throne of the beast, darkness spreads over his kingdom. It is the fore-shadow of that final withdrawal of light, the "outer darkness" of that awful time when they who have so often bidden God withdraw from them will be taken at their word. But who, out of hell, can tell what that will be? The science of the day has ascribed to the sun more than ever was before done; but who at any time could have said to the glowing sun, Depart from me: I desire darkness? Yet this is what they say to God.

Nor does the darkness work repentance: "They gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains and sores, and repent not of their deeds." Such is the hardening character of sin, and such the impotence of judgment in itself to break the heart and subdue the soul to God.

6. So far, spite of the general character of the bowls, they seem to have to do almost entirely with the beast and his followers; and these are, as we know, the principal enemies of Israel, and the boldest in defiance of God at the time of the end. Nevertheless, there are other adversaries besides those of the new risen empire of the west. The king of the north, or of Greece, is evidently in opposition at the close to the "king" in the land of Israel, who is the viceroy of the beast in Judea (Dan. xi. 36). This king of Greece also, if mighty, is so "not by his own power" (Dan. viii. 24). There is behind him, in fact, a mighty prince, who in Ezek. xxxviii., xxxix. comes clearly into view as head of many eastern nations, Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; Persia, Cush and Phut, with the house of Togarmah (Armenia), be-

way of the *kings from the sun-rising might be prepared. And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three 'unclean spirits, like *frogs; for they are spirits of demons, doing *signs, which go forth unto the kings of the whole habitable earth to *gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty. (Behold I *come as a thief. Blessed is he that *watcheth and *keepeth his garments, lest he walk *naked and they see his shame). And he gathered them together unto the *place called in the Hebrew tongue, Har-Magedon.

cf. 1 Thess. 5. 2-4; cf. 2 Pet. 3. 10. y cf. Mk. 13. 37. z cf. Jas. 1. 27; ctr. ch. 3. 4. 18; cf. 2 Cor. 5. 3. b cf. Zech. 12. 11 with 2 Ki. 23. 29, 30.

s cf. Is. 44. 27.
cf. Is. 41. 2, 25.
cf. Is. 46. 11.
t cf. 1 Tim. 4. 1.
u cf. Ex. 8. 1-6.
cf. Acts 8. 9.
v cf. ch. 13. 13.
cf. 2 Thess. 2. 9.
w cf. ch. 17. 14.
cf. ch. 19. 19.
x ch. 3. 3.
cf. Matt. 24. 43, 44.
a cf. ch. 3.

ing confederate with him. This is not the place to look at the people to whom all these names refer. Magog, the first of them, by common consent, stands for the Scythians, who, "mixed with the Medes," says Fausset, "became the Sarmatians, whence sprang the Russians." "Rosh" is thus, by more than *sound*, connected with Russia; as Meshech and Tubal may have given their names, but slightly changed, to Moscow and Tobolsk. The connection with Persia and Armenia (and with Greece, no less) is easily intelligible at the present day.

Here are powers, then, outside the revived Roman empire, which we find in relation with Israel at the time of the end, and which will find their place in the valley of Jehoshaphat ("Jehovah's judgment") in the day when the Lord sits there to judge all the nations round about (Joel iii. 12). Accordingly now, under the sixth bowl, the way is prepared for this, and the gathering is accomplished. The sixth bowl is poured out upon the *great river Euphrates*, the effect being that the water is dried up, "that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared." The Euphrates is the scene, also, of the sixth trumpet, which seems to give but a previous incursion of the same powers that are contemplated here, the door being now set widely open for them by the drying up of the river, the boundary of the Roman empire in the past, as it will be the boundary of restored Israel in the time to come. In the trumpet there was but an inroad upon the empire. Now there is much more than this. It is the gathering for the great day of God Almighty!

Accordingly, all the powers of evil are at work. "Three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are the spirits of demons working miracles, who go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God Almighty! . . . And they gathered them together unto the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon."

The frogs are creatures of slime and of the night—blatant, impudent impotents, cheap orators, who can yet gather men for serious work. Here, those brought together little know whom they go out to meet; but this is the common history of men revealed in its true character. The Cross has shown it to us on the one side; the conflict of the last days shows it on the other. The veil of the world is removed, and it is seen here what influences carry them: the "dragon," the spirit of a wisdom which, being "earthly," is "sensual, devilish" (Jas. iii. 15); the "beast," the influence of power, which apostate from God is bestial (Psa. xlix. 20); "the false prophet," the inspiration of hopes that are not of God: so the mass are led.

Har-Magedon is the "mount of slaughter." We read of Megiddo in the Old Testament as a "valley," not a mountain; whether it refers to this or no, the phrase seems equivalent to the "mountain of the slain," a mountain of heaped up corpses. To this, ignorant of what is before them, they are gathered.

A note of urgent warning is interjected here; no need of declaring the Speaker.

7 (17-21):
Seventh
bowl. "It
is done."

7. And the ^cseventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came out a great voice out of the temple,* from the throne, saying, It is ^adone. And there were ^elightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great ^fearthquake, such as had not been since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great. And the ^ggreat city was divided into three parts; and the cities of the nations fell; and ^hBabylon the great came into remembrance before God to give her the cup of the wine of the indignation of his ⁱwrath. {And every ^jisland fled, and the mountains were not found; and a great ^khail, as of a talent weight, cometh down out of heaven upon men; and men ^lblasphemed God because of the plague of hail, because the plague of it is exceeding great.

c cf. ch. 8.1.
d cf. ch. 11.15.
e cf. Eph. 2.2
f cf. ch. 10.6.
g cf. ch. 11.19.
h cf. ch. 11.13.
i cf. ch. 6.12.
j cf. ch. 17.9, 18.
k cf. ch. 17.1-5.
l cf. ch. 14.8.
m cf. ch. 14.10 with ch. 18.5.
n cf. ch. 6.14.
o cf. ch. 11.19.
p Ex. 9.18-25.
q vers. 9, 11.

* Some insert "of heaven."

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

It is to the world Christ's coming will be that of a thief, for "in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." "Blessed is he that watcheth" is, as we see by the closing words, a solemn warning to the heedless. Who will be ready at this time to hear? In any case, wisdom will utter its voice, and none shall go out to meet unwarned the doom of the rebellious. Good it is to find just in this place, whether heeded or not, the warning of mercy. Not the less terrible on that account the doom that comes.

7. And now the seventh angel pours his bowl into the air. Of "the power of the air" Satan is the prince (Eph. ii. 2), and all Satan's realm is shaken. A great voice breaks out of the throne, saying, It is done; and there are lightnings, and voices, and thunders—the "voices" showing the lightnings and thunders between which they come to be no mere natural tempest, but divinely guided judgment. There is an unparalleled convulsion, and the great city (Babylon, or, as we take it, Rome) is divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations generally fall. It is added, as respecting a special object of the divine judgment, "And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." This is in brief what is given presently in detail. Babylon has only once before been named in Revelation, but the two following chapters treat of it in full.

Then "every island fled away:" as I suppose, there is no isolation of any from the storm; "and the mountains were not found:" no power so great but it is humbled and brought low. "And a great hail, every stone about a talent weight, fell down from God out of heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great."

In the hail the effect of God's withdrawal from men is seen in judgment. The source of light and heat is one; and for the soul God is the source of both. The hail speaks not of mere withdrawal, but of this becoming a pitiless storm of judgment which subdues all, except, alas, the heart of man, which, while his anguish owns the power from which he suffers, remains, in its hard impenitency, the witness and justification of the wrath it has brought down.

SUBD. 6.

We are now to look at the final victory, which is, of course, the divine victory over the fully developed evil; as seen on the one hand in Babylon the great, the woman; and on the other hand in the beast and the false prophet, who at last are in opposition to her. Babylon the great has been hitherto only the

SUBDIVISION 6. (Chaps. xvii.—xx. 3.)

The final victory.

SECTION 1. (Chap. xvii.)

The rule of the harlot

AND there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, and spoke with me, saying, "Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon the many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell upon the earth have been

m ctr. ch. 21.
9.
n ch. 19. 2.
ctr. 2 Cor.
11. 2.
cf. Isa. 1. 21.
o ch. 18. 3, 9.
cf. Jas. 4. 4.

subject of brief reference. Nevertheless, its place cannot but be a great one in the prophecy of the book of Revelation, a book which joins together the testimony of the old prophets—the prophetic history of Israel with the close of Christendom; what we call the Christian dispensation having indeed closed before, when the Lord gathered away His people, as we have seen already in the fourth chapter. But it cannot but be a matter of intense interest and profit to know what is the final end of that which is left upon earth with the profession as yet of the Christian name, a profession which is now, of course, worse than hollow. Apostasy is the inevitable result; and accordingly Babylon, as we meet her now, becomes fully apostate. This involves of necessity the history of her connection with the beast and false prophet, who are the instruments of her final overthrow. This, then, is what is before us in detail now; while we have on the other hand the celebration of the triumph over her in heaven, and the marriage of the Lamb thereupon announced as come. Babylon being thus overthrown, we have next to see the overthrow of the beast and false prophet; but this is by the coming of the Lord Himself from heaven, the judgment, as Isaiah puts it, of "the host of the high ones that are on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth" (Isa. xxiv. 21).

Sec. 1.

Babylon is already announced as fallen in the fourteenth chapter, and as judged of God under the seventh bowl; but we have not yet seen what Babylon is, and we are not to be left to any uncertainty. She has figured too largely in human history, and is too significant a lesson every way to be passed over in so brief a manner. We are therefore now to be taught the "mystery of the woman."

For she is a mystery: not like the Babylon of old, the plain and straightforward enemy of the people of God. She is an enigma, a riddle; so hard to read, that numbers of God's people in every age have taken her, harlot as she is, for the chaste spouse of the Lamb. Yet here for all ages the riddle has been solved for those who are close enough to God to understand it, and the figure is gaudy enough to attract all eyes to her—seeking even to do so. Let us look with care into what is before us in these chapters, in which the woman is evidently the central object, the beast on which she is sitting being here viewed rather in its relation to her.

It is one of the angels of the bowls who exhibits her to the apostle, and his words naturally show us what she is characteristically as the object of divine judgment. As described by him, she is "the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

As brought into sharp contrast with the beast that carries her, we see that she is a woman, has the human form as the beast has not. A beast knows not God, and in Daniel we have found the Gentile power losing the human appearance which it has in the king's dream, to take the bestial, as in the vision of the

made ^udrunk with the wine of her fornication. And he carried me away in spirit into a ^vwilderness: and I saw a ^wwoman sitting upon a ^xscarlet beast, full of ^ynames of blasphemy, having ^zseven heads and ^{aa}ten horns. And the woman was ^{ab}clothed in purple and scarlet, and decked ^{ac}with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden ^{ad}cup in her hand, full of abomi-

p ch. 14. 8.
ctr. Eph. 5.
18, 19.
q ctr. ch. 21.
10.
r cf. ch. 2.20.
cf. Matt. 13.
33.
s cf. ch. 12.3
with ch. 13.
1.
t ctr. ch. 19.
12, 13, 16.
ctr. ch. 19. 8.

* Literally, "gilded."

^u ver. 9; cf. Rom. 1. 7. ^v vers. 12, 16; cf. Dan. 7. 24. ^w ch. 18. 16; cf. Lk. 16. 19; ^x ch. 18. 6; cf. Jer. 51. 7.

prophet. In Nebuchadnezzar personally we see what causes the change; that is, pride of heart which forgets dependence upon God. The woman, on the other hand, professedly owns God, and moreover, as a woman, takes the place of subjection to the man: in the symbol here, to Christ. When she is removed by judgment, the true bride is seen, to whom she is in contrast, and not, as so many think, to the woman of the twelfth chapter, who is mother, not bride, of Christ, and manifestly represents Israel.

But the woman here is a harlot in guilty relation with the kings of the earth. Here, also, is manifestly ambition, the desire of power on earth, the refusal of the cross of Christ, the place of rejection; and the wine, the intoxication of her fornication, makes drunk the "dwellers upon earth." These we have already seen to be a class of persons who, with a higher profession, have their hearts yet set upon earthly things. These naturally drink in the poison of her doctrine.

To see her, John is carried away, however, into the wilderness; for the earth is that, and all efforts of those who fain would do so cannot redeem it from this. There he sees the woman sitting on a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, easily identified as the beast of previous visions by its seven heads and ten horns. The beast is in a subjection to the woman which we should not expect. It is the imperial power, but in a position contrary to its nature as imperial; in this harmonizing with the interpretation of the angel afterwards—the "beast that was and is not." In some sort it is; in some sort it is not; and this we have to remember as we think of its heads and horns. If the beast is not, necessarily its heads and horns are not. These are for identification, not as if they were existing while the woman is being carried by it. In fact, she is now its head, and reigns over its body, over the mass that was and that will be again the empire, but now "is not."

What are we to say of the scarlet color and the names of blasphemy? Are they prospective, like the horns? The latter seems so, evidently, and therefore it is more consistent to suppose the former also, the difficulty of which may be relieved somewhat by the evident fact that of these seven heads only one exists at a time, as we see by the angel's words. The seven seen at once are again for identification, not as existing simultaneously. The scarlet color is that which typifies earthly glory—what is simply that. The beast's reign has no link with heaven. That it is full of *names*, not merely *words* of blasphemy, speaks of the assumption of titles which are divine, and therefore blasphemous to assume. Altogether, we see that it is the beast of the future that is presented here, but which could not really exist *as such* while carrying the woman. She could not exist in this relation to him, he being the beast that he is; and thus the expression is fully justified—really alone explains the matter—the "*beast that was, and is not, and will be.*"

There is clearly an identification of a certain kind all through. While the woman reigns, that over which she reigns is still, *in nature*, but the beast that was, and that after her reign will again be. There is no fundamental change all through. The Romanized nations controlled by Rome are curbed, not

nations and the unclean things of her fornication; and upon her forehead there was a name written, "Mystery," "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great wonder. And the angel said

y cf. Jer. 3. 3.
ctr. ch. 22. 4.
z ctr. Eph.
3. 3-6 with
Eph. 5. 32.
cf. 2 Thess.
2. 7.
a ch. 14. 8.
ver. 18.
b cf. ch. 2. 23.
c ch. 16. 6.
d ctr. ver. 8.

changed. And breaking from the curb, as did revolutionary France at the close of the eighteenth century, the wild-beast fangs and teeth at once display themselves.

But we are now called to consideration of the woman, who, as reigning as the professed spouse of Christ over what was once the Roman empire, is clearly seen to be what, as a system, we still call Rome—"that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth;" which did so even in John's time, although to him appearing in a garb so strange that when he sees her he wonders with a great wonder.

She is appareled in purple and scarlet, for she claims spiritual as well as earthly authority, and these are colors which Rome, as we know, affects; God thus allowing her even to the outward eye to assume the livery of her picture in Revelation. These external signs are not to be thought unsuitable because external. They are intended surely to invite our attention to what is underneath them. She is decked, too, with gold and precious stones and pearls, figures of really divine and spiritual truths, which, however, she only uses to adorn herself outwardly with, and indeed to make more enticing the cup of her intoxication: "having a golden cup in her hand," says the apostle, "full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications." Now we have her name: "And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

Her name is Mystery, yet it is written on her forehead. Her character is plain, if only you can read it. If you are pure, you may soon know that she is not. If you are true, you may quite easily detect her falsehood. In lands where she bears sway, as represented in this picture, she has managed to divorce morality from religion in such a manner that all the world knows the width of the breach. Her priests are used to convey the sacraments; and one need not look at the hands too closely that do so needful a work. In truth, it is an affair of the hands, with the magic of a little breath by means of which the most sinful of His creatures can create the God that made him, and easily new-create, therefore, another mortal like himself. This is a great mystery, which she herself conceives as "sacrament," and you may see this clearly on her forehead then. It is the trick of her trade, without which it could not exist. With it, a little oil and water and spittle become of marvelous efficacy, her capital stock indeed, out of which, at the smallest cost, the church can create riches and power, and much that has unquestionable value in her eyes.

"Babylon the great" means "confusion the great." Greater confusion there cannot be than that which confounds matter and spirit, creature and Creator, makes water to wash the soul, and brings the flesh of the Lord in heaven to feed literally with it men on earth. Yet to this is the larger part of Christendom captive, feeding on ashes, turned aside by a deceived heart; and they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isa. xlv. 20.)

This, for those who are deceived by it, lifts her at once into a place of supreme power that nothing can resist. If she has power to create God, she may well have power over all the creatures that He has created.

This frightful system has scattered wide the seed of its false doctrine, and the harlot-mother has daughters like herself. She is the "mother of harlots and

unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, who hath the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast which thou sawest, ^ewas, and is ^fnot, and is ^gabout to rise out of the abyss and go into ^hdestruction: and those that dwell upon the earth, whose names are not written in the ⁱ'book of life from the

^e ver. 11.
^f cf. ch. 6. 2.
^g cf. ch. 13. 3.
^h cf. ch. 18. 1.
ⁱ cf. ch. 19. 20.
^j ch. 3. 5.
^k cf. ch. 20. 12, 15.

abominations of the earth." Solemn words from the Spirit of truth, which may well search many hearts in systems that seem severed far from Rome, as well as those that more openly approach her. Who dare, with these awful scriptures before them, to speak smooth things as to the enormities of Rome? To be protestant is indeed in itself no sign of acceptance with God; but not to be protestant is certainly not to be with God in a most important matter. This Roman Babylon is not, moreover, some future form that is to be, though it may develop into worse yet than we have seen. It is that which has been (in the paradoxical language which yet is so lively a representation of the truth) seated upon the beast, while the beast "is not." It is popery, as we know it, and have to do with it; and woe to kings and rulers who truckle to it, or (again in the bold Scripture words) commit fornication with it! "Come out from her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues!"

"And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her," says the apostle, "I wondered with great wonder."

Romish apologists have been forced by the evidence to admit that it is Rome that is pictured here; but they say—and some Protestant interpreters have joined them in it—that it is *pagan* Rome. But how little cause of wonder to John in his Patmos banishment that the heathen world should persecute the saints! With us it is simple matter of history, and we have ceased to wonder; while, alas, it is true that many to-day no longer remember, and many more think we have no business to remember, the persecutor of old. It was the temper of those cruel times of old, many urge. Nineteenth century civilization has tamed the tiger, and Rome now loves her enemies, as the Christian should. But abundant testimony shows how false is this assertion. Here, just before her judgment, the apostle pronounces her condemnation for the murder of God's saints still unrepented of.

The angel now explains the mystery, and begins with the beast. "The beast that was, and is not" is clearly from the point of view of the vision, as has been said. The rule of the woman necessarily destroys beast-character while it lasts. But the beast will awake from its long sleep. It is about to come up out of the abyss, and go into perdition. This coming up out of the abyss, however, as has been elsewhere said, does not seem to be merely the revival of the empire: the key of the abyss in the hands of the fallen star under the fifth trumpet, and the angel of the abyss being the person who, by the two languages of his name is the destroyer of both Jew and Gentile, necessarily leads us to believe that there is in it the working of Satanic power. This is strengthened by the connection of this ascent with the "going into perdition" of that which comes up.

The previous revival under the seventh head would thus be passed over; this being in fact merely temporary and transitional; the prophecy, which is not a history of the beast, but of its relation to the woman, hastens on to what is most important; the beast pictured here being identified, in fact, in the prophecy itself, with its *own eighth head* (ver. 11). That it has only seven, as seen in the vision, is not against this, if the seventh and eighth heads are the same person.

The unhappy "dwellers upon the earth" wonder at this revival, whose names have not from the foundation of the world been written in the book of the Lamb slain. Divine grace is that alone which makes any to differ; and of this we are

foundation of the world, shall ^jwonder when they see the beast, because he was, and is not, and shall be present. Here is the mind that hath ^kwisdom. The seven heads are seven ^lmountains whereupon the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are ^mfallen, one ⁿis, the other is ^onot yet come; and when he cometh he must remain a ^plittle while. And the ^qbeast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the

j ch. 13. 3, 4.
k cf. ch. 13. 18.
l cf. Acts 28. 14.
m cf. Dan. 2. 21.
n cf. Acts 25. 12.
o ver. 8.
p cf. ch. 13. 5.
q ch. 13. 1, 3.

reminded here. The power that works in the revival of the beast is plainly beyond that of man; and how many in the present day seem to take for granted that whatever is of more than human power must be divine! This is the essence of the "strong delusion" which God sends upon those who have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Powers and signs and lying wonders confirm the imperial last head in his pretension; and that they are "*lying*" means, not that they are mere juggling and imposition, but that they are made to foster lies. They shall wonder, seeing how that the beast "was, and is not, and shall be present [again]."

And here is the mind that hath wisdom, the divine secret for an understanding heart. First, as to the woman: "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth." One would think there need not be much doubt about the application of this, and in general there has not been. That Rome was the seven-hilled city is familiar to every schoolboy, and its being a "geographical" mark need not make it unsuited to be one, as Lange believes. God would point out in this way, in a manner plain even to unspiritual souls, if possible, what it is of which He is speaking here; and He has even, if one may so say, gone out of the way to give a needed plain mark of identification, that His saints may know, whose blood it would shed, and who would need the comfort of knowing, that He was against this "mother and mistress of the churches," with all her effrontery, and the crowd that follow her.

But the heads are also seven kings, consecutive, not contemporaneous rulers; for five had already fallen, one was, and another was yet to come, only to exist for a short time; the beast himself being the final one. Imperial Rome was evidently what existed in the apostle's day. "One is" we must take, as it seems, as applying to the apostle's day, for at the time of the vision the beast itself "is not." The only other time present would be the time in which the apostle lived himself.

The imperial head came to an end necessarily when the empire as a whole broke up under the attacks of the barbarians; and to make, as Barnes and others do, the exarch of Ravenna the seventh head of the *world*-empire, is either to overlook the plain terms of the prophecy, or else to pervert the simple facts of history. The exarchate lasted about 200 years, which Barnes considers comparatively but a short time, and the papacy he considers to be the eighth head. This falls with the exarchate; for the papacy would then be but the seventh, and nothing would correspond.

The seventh head began, according to Elliott, when Diocletian, already emperor, assumed the diadem—the symbol of despotic sovereignty after the Eastern fashion; and he quotes Gibbon's words, that, "like Augustus, Diocletian may be considered the founder of a new empire." But if this were the seventh head, there was a gap between it and the papacy, and this must have been the time when the beast "was not." This is better in some respects than Barnes, and may really be an anticipative fulfilment such as we find in the historical interpretation generally. But it fails when we come to apply it consistently all through, as where Elliott has to make the burning of the woman with fire by the ten horns to be merely the devastation of the city and the Campagna prior to their giving power to the beast, whereas in the prophecy it is really effected by the beast and the horns together, and is the complete end of the system

seven, and goeth to "destruction. And the ten horns which thou sawest are "ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet, but receive authority as kings "one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and give their power and authority to the beast. These shall make "war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall "over-

ref. ch. 19. 20.
s Dan. 7. 24.
l cf. ch. 18. 10.
etc.
ver. 10.
u ch. 19. 19.
ch. 16. 14.
v ch. 19. 20.
cf. 2 Thess.
2. 8, 9.

which the woman represents. It would be manifestly incongruous to suppose the papacy to hate and consume the Roman Catholic church.

The scheme of prophecy involved in all this, if taken as a whole, must be reserved for an after-time, to consider more closely. When the papacy in fact ruled the empire, it had ceased to be in a proper sense the empire, and then it was that, according to the chapter before us, the beast was not. The true bestial character could not co-exist with even the profession of Christianity.

The beast is necessarily, therefore, secular, not ecclesiastical. When the secular empire fell, the beast was not; though in that contradictory condition the woman might ride it. Since that fall there has been no revival, and therefore, as yet, no seventh head. The seventh head seems to be constituted that by the union of ten portions of the divided territory to give him power; and the preponderance of Russia in Europe might easily bring about a coalition of this kind. The new imperial head lasts but a short time, is smitten with a sword, possibly degraded to the condition of a "little horn," is revived by the dreadful power of Satan acting through the antichristian second beast of the thirteenth chapter, assumes the blasphemous character in which we have already seen him, and then throws off the last remnant of the rule of the woman. This is the beast as Revelation contemplates him generally, identified with the eighth head, but which is of the seven; in fact, is the seventh which had the wound by the sword, yet lived. Thus seen, all the passages seem to harmonize; a harmony which is the main argument for the truth of such an interpretation of them.

"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and give their power and authority unto the beast." Alas, they are united against God and His Christ: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Here we have anticipated the conflict of the nineteenth chapter. These that are with Christ are His redeemed people, as is plain. Angels may be "chosen and faithful," but only men are "called"; and when He comes forth as a warrior out of heaven, they, as "the armies that were in heaven, follow Him." The rod of iron which He has Himself is given to His people, and the closing scene in the conflict with evil sees them in active and earnest sympathy with Him.

The waters where the harlot sat are next interpreted as "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." With another meaning and intent than where it is spoken of Israel, "her seed is in many waters." Her influence is wide-reaching and powerful, but it is brought to an end: "and the ten horns which thou sawest and the beast;"—so, and not "upon the beast," all authorities give it now;—"these shall hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her up with fire." That surely is not a temporary infliction, but a full end; and beast and horns unite together in it. She has trampled upon men, and according to the law of divine retribution this is done to her. This has been partially seen many times in the history of Rome, and the end of the eighteenth century was a dreadful warning of what is soon to come more terribly still upon her. The very profession of Christianity which she in time past used for the purpose of gain and power over men will, no doubt, by the same retributive law, become at last the millstone around her neck; and no eye will pity her, for it is God who has "put into their hearts to do His will,

come them; for he is "Lord of lords and King of kings; and those that are with him are "called, and chosen, and faithful. And he saith unto me, The "waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and

wo ch. 19. 16.
cf. 1 Tim. 6.
15.
x cf. ch. 19.
14.
cf. Rom. 1.6.

y cf. ch. 13. 1; cf. Dan. 7. 2 with Ps. 2. 1.

and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God shall be accomplished."

How good to know, amid all that day of terror, that God is supreme, above all, in all, the devices of His enemies! Still "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of it He restraineth." And this is the time which will most fully demonstrate this. It is the day of the Lord upon all the pride of man, to bring it low. It is the day when every refuge of lies shall be swept away and all the vanity of his thoughts shall be exposed. "The idols He shall utterly abolish." Yea, those who have been their slaves shall fling them to the moles and the bats. "And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Then the way is prepared for blessing, wide in proportion to the judgment which has introduced it.

There is yet a question which we should consider before passing on, and which affects the whole interpretation already given with regard to Babylon the great. It is being urged with more and more confidence, and by a growing number of prophetic students also, that Babylon here is, after all, *not* Rome, but the ancient city upon the Euphrates, which is to revive in the last days and manifest the old spirit which it had from the beginning. It is plain that the name itself is what has suggested this. Otherwise one would say it would never have found the acceptance which it has. The introduction, to so large an extent, of literalism into the interpretation of Revelation naturally provides for this view a great support. Those who can believe that the new Jerusalem itself is only a great city,—literally 12,000 furlongs in measure, a cube or a pyramid, as it is variously considered, its foundations literal jewels, and all else accordant,—will contend most earnestly that Babylon the great is no other than that so constantly before us in the Old Testament Scriptures. Those, on the other hand, who believe that Revelation is essentially a book of symbols will find in the very name itself a suggestion really the other way. We need rather special proof that the name is literal here, where the beast, the horns, and other surroundings are so manifestly figurative. Then the word "mystery" comes before the name, as if to assure us that there is something deeper than the letter in it. Afterwards, also, we have the warning that, "here is the mind that hath wisdom;" which, again, suggests the care we need in looking at all this. Harlotry is the uniform figure for the departure from God of one in professed spiritual relation to Him. There are two exceptions to this—in the case of Tyre (Isa. xxiii.) and Nineveh (Nahum iii.). These are the only ones to be found in all Scripture, while abundance of quotations could be given from the prophets in which Israel's relation to God is the very *ground* of such charges against a people departed from Him, and violating the relation in which He has brought them to Himself. The woman herself suggests such a thought as this. The woman of the twelfth chapter is not, however, as many take it, the figure of the Christian Church, but rather of Israel, as we have seen. That Babylon here is in contrast with her we need not deny or doubt, and the contrast comes out plainly in the fourteenth chapter, where the 144,000 stand upon mount Zion with the Lamb. Of them it is said, "These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins." Against Babylon of old no such charge as what is here is ever made. Babylon the great is not only a harlot, but the "mother of harlots,"—a term which the lateness of Rome in the world's history, according to some, makes it impossible to apply to her. And this connects itself with the objection derived from the universality of Babylon's rule here, as also with the charge against her of "the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth." The answer to this should be plain, that the Lord charges Jerusalem

multitudes, and nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire;

z cf. Jud. 9. 23, 24.
cf. 2K1.9.30-37 with ch. 2. 20-23.
cf. Matt. 5. 13 with ch. 13 with Jas. 4. 4.

3. 16; cf. Ezek. 16. 37-41. a cf. Lev. 21. 9 with Jas. 4. 4.

in His day in a similar manner; declaring that upon her inhabitants shall come "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." "All these things," He declares, "shall come upon this generation" (Matt. xxiii. 35, 36). Certainly, nothing is said of Babylon here that can be stronger than this; and in fact upon any generation that takes up openly the sins of its ancestors, and makes them its own, such things may be said. That is how the Lord speaks of Jerusalem, and that is how the prophet speaks here.

There is no doubt that Babylon the great here is identified in spirit with the Babylon of old, and this accounts for the name given to her. There is a real unity in Satan's work from the beginning, while at the same time it develops from age to age, to keep pace with the developing revelation of God. It is this development which is so important here, and which seems to be so much forgotten by those who see here Babylon on the Euphrates. Idolatry is thus connected all through the world's history; and it is sadly interesting to trace in Romanism at the present time the adoption of certain old forms of idolatry, as indeed history assures us it has always, in every land, shown itself ready to ally itself with such things, covering them only with a new and Christian name. Indeed, the account of Babel at the beginning certainly looks forward to that which we find here, but not in the way in which it is represented by many: modern research and fragmentary traditions being woven together to make a history of the Biblical account for which the Bible itself is not responsible. Thus we are told that "the Bible says that it was arranged for the people to make for themselves a 'name'—a *sem*, token, sign, banner, ensign, or mark of confederation, fellowship, and organized unity," and that "that *sem*, or *sema*, was, in the language of the time, a *Sema-Rama*." Thus we have the name of the mythic *Semiramis*, the dove-goddess, which was the ensign of all the Assyrian princes. . . . The symbol of such a name or confederation would naturally, and almost necessarily, take the place of a god, and become the holy mother, the great heavenly protectress," etc., etc. All this is inventing for the Bible, to bring it up to what the Bible is here supposed to say. The thought of the Babel-multitudes, as Scripture in fact gives it, "to make themselves a name" is as simple as possible, and does not permit such things to be read into it.

Scripture is sufficient of itself in all matters of this kind, and its own account of Babylon is surely not lacking. Its typical character has been already remarked upon in its place. All this history in Genesis belongs to a great system of types in which Israel's own history is included, according to the apostle's words, "All these things happened unto them for types, and are written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the ages are come." Thus the history of Israel is repeated in the Church, and the Babylonian captivity of Israel has had sorrowful repetition in that other Babylonian captivity which has left its mark everywhere upon Christendom to-day. These types in history are a result of the fundamental unity of man everywhere, in his weakness, his folly, and his sin, over which there has been always God's controlling hand, acting according to His unity also with His own hand. Scripture gives us the history in such a manner as to bring out the types, and show us God's knowledge of everything and control of everything from the beginning. But if we go outside of Scripture, it is quite possible in such things to follow a false clue, and lose the meaning. In fact, by reverting here to Babylon, as at the beginning, the meaning is lost, the end of Christendom as here set before us is obscured. It is not permitted to be apostate Christendom, but a new thing which replaces it, and which is

for God hath put into their hearts to do ^b his mind, and to act with one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God shall be completed. And the woman which thou sawest is the ^c great city that hath sway over the kings of the earth.

b cf. ch. 18.
8, 20.

c ver. 9.
ctr. Ps. 48.2.

but a revival of what was at the beginning. In the last phase of things here, it is Babylon herself that is to be set aside in the open revolt against God which follows it. The woman here presents to us what we must not be allowed to miss, the end of the false pretension of the day, after the true Church is removed to heaven. When this is done, Satan is met upon his own ground as manifestly Satan. Only the battle of the great day of the Lord God Almighty remains. The anti-Church is gone, but in its place there is an anti-Christ and anti-God; and man shows what has been in his heart all through, by taking his side against God, under Satan's banner. Thus we have gone back of Babylon itself to where man placed himself at the fall; only now this is done deliberately and after the long, patient trial of centuries. The devil's word, "Ye shall be as God," is now, if possible, to be carried out; and with this open defiance the end comes, of course.

The connection of the woman with the beast is of the greatest importance to consider in all this. The beast is plainly Daniel's fourth beast, however much it may unite in itself at last the characters of those preceding. But Daniel's fourth beast, it is evident, has no successor. It is *Rome*, therefore, that is to be found in power at the end, as Babylon was at the beginning. It is not imperial Babylon that is to be revived, nor is it possible to make room in the prophecy for this. It may be true that the seven heads of the beast, successive as they are plainly, may, as already has been said, begin before Rome, and the Roman beast be seen in this, like the Roman woman, to be but the development of that which began in earliest human history. The beast, though the Roman beast, is only the continuance of the lawless Gentile powers that were from the beginning ever against God. The six heads culminate, as already said, in Rome, before the collapse of the empire. The seventh head is a new imperial head, as seen with its ten horns and as carrying the woman. It is a different form of power, transitional, and thus anomalous, but with the germ in it of the last, so that the whole number of horns is, in another view, only nine. When Christianized, Rome already lost in a sense its beast-character, though still in fact existing. Morally, it was never Christian, and its profession to be this was but a weight upon it, provoking judgment for its profession of the holy name. Thus it went down, as the historical view of Revelation shows, under the war-trumpets. The trumpets begin the history of the Church, when Church and world have become thus one. Thus at last the beast was not, though the "holy Roman empire" remained, as it were, as the ghost of what was departed. When it rises again, it rises in this anomalous condition; but even as it could not continue in this way before, so now its continuance is but "for a short time." The seventh head is wounded to death, and only revived by the power of Satan when now it becomes, as the eighth head, openly apostate, destroying the woman herself, and thus making an end of the corrupt profession upon earth. There now remains only the open war with God and the Lamb.

The connection of Rome, the city, with the Babylonian harlot is easily seen; and it is not, as Außerlen says, "totally at variance with the spirit of this thoroughly symbolical book." He would, with others, even deny the note of identification presented by the seven mountains upon which the woman sitteth. We have been told by another that these could not be even called "mountains;" they were but very small hills; but the Romans, who may be supposed to know their own language best, call them, nevertheless, montes—"mountains;" and it is quite the order of things, as shown in history, that a system of this kind should have a local representation and a name. The city of Rome has long been the centre and head of a corrupted Christianity, and cannot be released

SECTION 2. (Chap. xviii.)

Her judgment.

AFTER these things I saw ^danother angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was ^elightened with his glory; and he cried with a ^fmighty voice, saying, ^gBabylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and become the ^hdwelling place of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird; for all the nations have ⁱdrunk of the wine of the fury of her fornication; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her; and the ^jmerchants of the earth have become rich by the power of her luxury. And I heard ^kanother voice out of heaven saying, ^lCome out of her, my people, that ye ^mpartake not of her sins, and that ye re-

d cf. ch. 8.3, etc.
e cf. ch. 10.1.
f cf. Ps. 97. 4.
g cf. Ezek. 48. 2.
h cf. ch. 10. 3.
i cf. ch. 14. 8.
j Is. 21. 9.
k Jer. 51. 8.
l cf. Is. 13. 21.
m cf. Jer. 50. 39.
n cf. Jer. 51. 37.
o ch. 17. 4.
p vers 11, 12.
q cf. ch. 16. 7.
r Is. 48. 20.
s cf. Is. 52. 11.
t cf. Jer. 50. 8.
u cf. Gen. 19. 15, 16.
v cf. 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18.
w cf. Eph. 5. 14.

from the responsibility of this. Thus, in the Lord's day, as all through her history, Jerusalem, on the other hand, has been identified with Israel, and is the sign of their condition at the present time. In the judgment of Babylon which follows here, Rome will assuredly be found to have her part, and to remain, in her utter desolation, such a witness for God as Babylon upon the Euphrates has long been.

Sec. 2.

The eighteenth chapter gives the judgment from the divine side. The question has been naturally raised, Is it another judgment? There is nothing here about beast or horns,—nothing of man's intervention at all,—and there are signs apparently of another and deeper woe than human hands could inflict. It is this last which is most conclusive in the way of argument, and we shall examine it in its place.

Another angel descends out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth is lighted with his glory. Earth is indeed now to be lighted, and with a glory which is not of earth. Babylon is denounced as fallen, not destroyed, as is plain by what follows, but given up to a condition which is a spiritual desolation worse than the physical one of Babylon of old, under which she has long lain, and from which the terms seem derived. She has become the dwelling-place of demons—"knowing ones;" Satan's underlings, with the knowledge of many centuries of acquaintance with fallen men, and serpent-craft to use their knowledge; ■ "hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird." The parable of the mustard-seed comes necessarily to mind; and without confining the words here to that, it is amazing to see how deliberately filthy and impure Rome's system is. She binds her clergy to celibacy, forces them to pollute their minds with the study of every kind of wickedness, and then, by her confessional system, teaches them to pour this out into the minds of those to whom she at once gives them access and power over—and all this in the name of religion!

What has brought a professing Christian body into so terrible a condition as this bespeaks? We are answered here by reference once more to her spiritual fornication with the nations and with the kings of the earth, and to the profit which those make who engage in her religious traffic. As worldly power is before all things her aim, and she has heaven to barter in return for it, the nations easily fall under her sway, and are intoxicated with the "wine of the fury"—the madness—"of her fornication." First of all, it is the masses at which she aims, and only as an expedient to secure these the better, the kings of the earth. Thus she can pose as democratic among democrats, and as the protector of popular rights

ceive not of her plagues: for her sins have been "heaped up to heaven, and God hath "remembered her unrighteous deeds. "Render to her as she also hath rendered, and "double to her double according to her works. In the cup which she hath mixed, mix to her double. As much as she hath "glorified herself and lived luxuriously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a "queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore in "one day shall her plagues come: death and sorrow and famine, and she shall be burnt with fire; for "strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her, shall "weep and mourn for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for fear of her torment, say-

t cf. Is. 47. 9; ver. 10; cf. ch. 3. 3. u cf. Jer. 50.34; cf. Heb.10. 31. v cf. Jer. 50. 46; ctr. ver. 20.

*n cf. Jer. 51. 9.
cf. Is. 1.11-15.
o ch. 16. 19.
ctr. Gen.19. 29.
p cf. Jer. 50. 15, 29.
cf. Jer. 51. 24, 49.
q cf. Jer. 16. 18.
ctr. Is. 40. 2.
cf. Matt. 7. 2.
r cf. Ezek. 28. 2 8.
cf. ch. 3.17.
s cf. Is. 47.7, 8.
cf. 1Cor. 4.8.
ctr. Lk. 6.24-26.*

as against princes. In feudal times the Church alone could fuse into herself all conditions of men, turning the true and free equality of Christians into that which linked all together into vassalage to herself; and so the power grew which was power to debase herself to continually greater depths of evil. Simoniac to the finger-ends, with her it is a settled thing that the "gift of God can be purchased with money." And with her multiplicity of merchandise, which is put here in catalogue, there will naturally be an abundant harvest for brokers. With these, who live by her, she increases her ranks of zealous followers.

Another voice now sounds from heaven—"Come forth from her, My people, that ye partake not of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have heaped themselves to heaven, and God hath remembered her unrighteousness."

Even in Babylon, and thus late therefore, there are those in her who are the people of God. But they are called to separation. Rome is a false system which yet retains what is saving truth. Souls may be saved in it, but the truth it holds cannot save the false system in which it is found. Truth cannot save the error men will ally with it, nor error destroy the truth. There are children of God, alas, that "suffer Jezebel," but Jezebel's true children are another matter: "I will kill them with death" is God's emphatic word. The testing-time comes when the roads that seemed to lie together are found to separate, and then the necessity of separation comes. Truth and error cannot lead to the same place, and he that pursues the road to the end will find what is at the end.

"Recompense to her as she recompensed; according to her works, double to her double: as she hath glorified herself, and lived luxuriously, so much torment and sorrow give her. For she said in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore in one day shall her plagues come on her—death, and sorrow, and famine; and she shall be burned up with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

The government of God is equal-handed, and for it the day of retribution cannot be lacking. "God hath remembered" Babylon at last. In truth He never lost sight of her for a moment. But the wheels of His chariot seem often slow in turning, and there is purpose in it: "I gave her space to repent," He says pitifully; but pity is not weakness—nay, it is the consciousness of strength that may make one slow. There is no possibility of escape. No height or depth can hide from Him the object of His search—no greatness, no littleness. The day of reckoning comes at last, and not an item will be dropped from the account.

Then follows the wail of the kings of the earth for her, while they stand off

ing, Woe, woe, the great city Babylon, the mighty city, because in "one hour is thy judgment come. And the "merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, because no one buyeth their merchandise any more,— "merchandise of "gold, and "silver, and "precious stones; and "pearls, and "fine linen, and "purple, and silk, and "scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every article of "ivory, and every article of most precious wood, and of "brass, and of "iron, and of marble; and cinnamon, and amomum, and "incense,* and unguent, and frankincense, and "wine, and oil, and fine "flour, and wheat, and "cattle, and sheep, and [merchandise] of "horses, and chariots, and "bodies and souls of men. And the fruits of the lust of thy soul are "departed from thee; and all fair and splendid things are perished from thee, and they shall not find them longer at all. The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall "stand afar off because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the "great city, that was clothed with fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls! for in "one hour is so great riches become desolate. And every "pilot, and every voyager, and sailors, and as many as trade by the sea, stood afar off, and cried, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, What [city] is like the great city? And they cast "dust upon their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her precious things!† for in one hour she is made desolate.

* Rejoice over her, heaven, and ye saints, and apostles, and prophets; for "God hath judged your judgment upon her.

* A plural.

† Literally, "preciousness."

w vers. 17, 19.
x vers. 3, 15.
y cf. Ezek. 27.
z ctr. Ex. 25. 1-7.
cf. Ezek. 16. 11-19.
a ctr. Ex. 38. 25-28.
b ctr. Ex. 39. 10-13.
c ctr. ch. 21. 21.
d ctr. ch. 19. 8.
e ctr. Ex. 26. 1.
ctr. 1 Tim. 6. 15.
f ctr. ch. 19. 16.
g ctr. Ps. 45. 8.
h ctr. ch. 1. 15.
i ctr. Is. 60. 17.
j ctr. Is. 6. 4.
cf. Ex. 30. 38.
k ctr. Num. 15. 4, 5.
l ctr. Lev. 2. 1.
m ctr. Lev. 1. 2.
n ctr. ch. 19. 11, 14.
o ctr. Gal. 5. 1.
p cf. ch. 17. 16.
q vers. 10, 17.
r ch. 17. 18.
s vers. 10, 19.
t cf. Ezek. 27. 28, 29.
u cf. 1 Sam. 4. 12.
v cf. Jer. 51. 48.
cf. Is. 44. 23.
cf. ch. 12. 12.
w cf. ch. 19. 2.

in fear for the calamity that is come upon her, more sentimental than the selfish cry of the merchants, whose business with regard to her has slipped out of their hands. And then comes the detail of it, article by article—all the luxuries of life, each of which has its price, and ending with "slaves, and souls of men." If one had skill to run through the catalogue here, he would doubtless find that each had its meaning; but we cannot attempt this now. The end of the traffic is at hand, and the Canaanite is to be cast out of the house of the Lord.

The lament of so many classes shows by how many links Rome has attached men to herself. Her vaunted unity is large enough to include the most various adaptations to the character of men. From the smoothest and most luxurious life to the hardest and most ascetic, she can provide for all grades, and leave room for large diversities of doctrine also. The suppleness of Jesuitism is only that of her trained athletes, and the elasticity of its ethics is only that of the subtlest ethereal distillation of her spirit. But though she may have allurements even for the people of God, she has yet no link with heaven; and while men are lamenting upon earth, heaven is bidden to rejoice above, because God is judging her with the judgment that saints, and apostles, and prophets, have pronounced upon her.

And a ²strong angel took up a stone like a great ³millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all; and the ⁴voice of harpers and musicians, and flute-players, and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no ⁵artificer of any art shall be found any more at all in thee; and the ⁶sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the ⁷light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of ⁸bridegroom and bride shall be heard no more at all in thee; for thy ⁹merchants were the great men of the earth, for by thy ¹⁰sorcery were all nations led astray. And there was found in her the ¹¹blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

x cf. ch. 10. 1.
y cf. Jer. 51.
63, 64.
z cf. Is. 24. 8.
ctr. ch. 14. 1
-8.
a cf. Lk. 17.
28.
b cf. Jer. 24.
10.
cf. Eccl. 12.
4.
c ctr. ch. 22.
5.
d cf. Jer. 16.
9.
ctr. ch. 19.
7, 8.
e cf. Is. 23. 8.
f cf. Nah. 3.
4.
Prov. 9. 13
-18.
g ch. 17. 6.
cf. 1 KI. 18. 4 with ch. 2. 20.

Finally, and reminding us of the prophetic action as to her prototype, "a strong angel took up a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon the great city be cast down, and shall be found no more at all." And then comes the extreme announcement of her desolation. Not merely shall her merchandise be no more, there shall be no sign of life at all—no pleasant sound, no mechanic's craft, no menial work, no light of lamp, no voice of bridegroom or of bride; and then the reason of her doom is again given; "For thy merchants were the princes of the earth; for with thy sorcery were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth."

Interpretation is hardly needed in all this. The detail of judgment seems intended rather to fix the attention and give us serious consideration of what God judges at last in this unsparing way. Surely it is needed now, when Christian men are being taken with the wiles of one who in a day of conflict and uncertainty can hold out to them a rest which is not Christ's rest; who, in the midst of defection from the faith, can be the champion of orthodoxy while shutting up the Word of Life from men; who can be all things to all men, not to save, but to destroy them; at such a time, how great a need is there for pondering her doom as the word of prophecy declares it, and the joy of heaven over the downfall of the sorceress at last!

Heaven, indeed, is full of joy, and gratulation, and worship: "After these things, I heard, as it were, a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! salvation, and honor, and glory, and power, belong to our God; for true and righteous are His judgments; for He hath judged the great harlot which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And a second time they say, Hallelujah! And her smoke goeth up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped God, saying, Amen: hallelujah!"

We may now briefly discuss the question of how far there is indication here of a divine judgment apart from what is inflicted by the wild beast and its horns. These, we have read, "shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her up with fire." In the present chapter we have again, "And she shall be burned up with fire; for strong is the Lord God who hath judged her." The kings of the earth "wait over her when they look upon the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment." And so with the merchants and the mariners. And finally we read, "Her smoke goeth up for ever and ever." Nothing in all this forces us to think of a special divine judgment outside of what is inflicted by human instruments,

except the last. The last statement, I judge, does. It cannot but recall to our minds what is said of the worshipers of the beast and false prophet in the fourteenth chapter, where the same words are used; but this is not a judgment on earth at all; could, indeed, "her smoke goeth up for ever and ever" be said of any earthly judgment? The words used are such as strictly imply eternity: no earthly judgment can endure in this way; and the language does not permit the idea that the persistency is only that of the effects. No, it is eternity ratifying the judgment of time, as it surely will do; and it is only when we have taken our place, as it were, amid the throng in heaven that this is seen.

But thus, then, we seem to have here no positive declaration of any judgment of Babylon on earth, save by the hands of the last head of western empire and his kings. Yet the eighteenth chapter, we have still to remember, says nothing of these kings: all is from God absolutely, and at least they are not considered. It has been also suggested that it is the "city" rather than the woman (the ecclesiastical system) that is before us in this chapter; but much cannot be insisted on as to this, seeing that the identification of the woman with the city is plainly stated in the last verse of the previous one, and also that the terms even here suppose their identity.

On the other side, there is in fact no absolute identity; nor is it difficult to think of the destruction of the religious system without its involving at all that of the city; nor, again, would one even suppose that the imperial head, with his subordinates, would utterly destroy the ancient seat of his own empire. Here a divine judgment, strictly and only that, taking up and enforcing the human one as of God, becomes at least a natural thought, and worthy of consideration.

Outside of the book of Revelation, Scripture is in full harmony with this. The millennial earth, as we may have occasion to see again, when we come to speak more of it, is certainly to have witnesses of this kind to the righteous judgment of God upon the objects of it. In it, as it were, heaven and hell are both to be represented before the eyes of men, that they may be fully warned of the wrath to come. During the present time, it is objected, there is not sufficient witness; in the Millennium, therefore, there shall be no room left for doubt. Therefore, while the cloud and fire rest as of old, but with wider stretch, as of sheltering wings, over Jerusalem (Isa. iv. 5, 6; comp. Matt. xxii. 37), we have on the other side the open witness of the judgment upon transgressors which the Lord Himself renders, as a type of the deeper judgment beyond (Isa. lxvi. 23, 24; comp. Mark ix. 43-50).

Besides this, Edom remains desolate, and, to come near to what is before us, Babylon also (Isa. xiii. 20; xxxiv. 9, 10). How suitable that Rome, the seat of a power far worse, and of far greater significance, should be so visited! Such a judgment would fill out the prophecy most fully and exactly. What a picture of eternal judgment is that of Idumea, in that "year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion"! "And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up forever." Rome is the great Edom, as it is the great Babylon; and it would be really strange if there were not to be in her case a similar recompense. Barnes quotes from a traveler in Italy in 1850 what is only a striking confirmation of the story told by all who with eyes open have visited the country: "I behold everywhere, in Rome, near Rome, and through the whole region from Rome to Naples, the most astounding proofs, not merely of the possibility, but the probability, that the whole region of central Italy will one day be destroyed by such a catastrophe. The soil of Rome is *tufa*, with a volcanic subterranean action going on. At Naples the boiling sulphur is to be seen bubbling near the surface of the earth. When I drew a stick along the ground, the sulphurous smoke followed the indentation. . . . The entire country and district is volcanic. It is saturated with beds of sulphur and the substrata of destruction. It seems as

SECTION 3. (Chap. xix. 1-10.)

The Marriage of the Lamb.

AFTER these things, I heard as the loud ^avoice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Hallelujah; the salvation and glory and power of our God! for ^jtrue and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great ^kharlot who corrupted the earth by her fornication; and hath ^lavenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, ^mHallelujah. And her ⁿsmoke ascendeth up to the ages of ages. And the ^ofour and twenty elders and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God who sitteth upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah. And there came out a ^pvoice from the throne, saying: ^qPraise our God, all ye servants of His who fear him, small and great. And I heard as the voice of a ^rgreat multitude, and as the voice of ^smany waters, and as the voice of mighty ^tthunders, saying, ^uHallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned. Let us ^vrejoice and be glad, and give him glory; for the ^wmarriage of the Lamb hath come, and his wife hath ^xmade herself ready. And there was ^ygiven to her that she should

h ch. 18. 20.
ch. 11. 15.
i cf. Ps. 148.
1. etc.
j ch. 12. 10.
ch. 15. 3.
ch. 16. 7.
Ps. 96. 13.
k ch. 17. 1.
l cf. ch. 6. 10.
cf. Lk. 18. 7.
8.
m ver. 1.
n ch. 18. 9, 18.
cf. Mk. 9. 48.
o ch. 5. 14.
p cf. ch. 18. 4.
q cf. Ps. 134.
1.
r ver. 1.
cf. ch. 7. 9.
cf. Heb. 12. 22.
s ch. 14. 2.
t cf. Ex. 20. 18.
u ch. 11. 15, 17.
cf. Ps. 97. 1, etc.
v ctr. ch. 18. 19.
w cf. ■ Cor. 11. 2.
cf. Eph. 5. 25-27.
x ctr. Tit. 3. 5; ctr. Phil. 3. 9; cf. 2 Cor. 5. 9; cf. 1 Cor. 3. 12-15. *y* cf. 1 Cor. 15. 10.

certainly prepared for the flames as the wood and coal on the hearth are prepared for the taper which shall kindle the fire to consume them. The divine hand alone seems to me to hold the fire in check by a miracle as great as that which protected the cities of the plain till the righteous Lot had made his escape to the mountains."

That Rome's doom will be as thus indicated we may well believe. And it is in awful suitability that she that has kindled so often the fire for God's saints should thus be herself a monumental fire of His vengeance in the day in which He visits for these things!

Sec. 3.

The harlot is now judged. The judgment of the whole earth is at hand. Before it comes, we are permitted a brief vision of heavenly things, and to see the heirs of the kingdom now ready to be established in their place with Him who is about to be revealed. A voice sounds from the throne: "Give praise to our God, all ye His servants—ye that fear Him, small and great." It is not, of course, a simple exhortation to what in heaven can need no prompting, but a preparation of hearts for that which shall furnish fresh material for it. The response of the multitude shows what it is: "Hallelujah! for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth." The power that was always His, He is now going to put forth. Judgment is to return to righteousness. Man's day is at an end, with all the confusion that his will has wrought. The day of the Lord is come, to abase that which is high and exalt that which is low, and restore the foundations of truth and righteousness.

The false church, that would have antedated the day of power, and reigned without her Lord, has been already dealt with; and now the way is clear to display the true Bride. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." But the Church has been some time since caught up to meet the Lord: how is it that only now she is "ready"? In the application of the blood of Christ, and the reception of the best robe, fit for the Father's house assuredly, if any could be, she was *then* quite ready. Likeness to her Lord was

be ^a clothed with fine linen, bright [and] pure; for the fine linen is the ^a righteousnesses of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, ^b Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the ^c true words of God. And I ^d fell before his feet to worship him, and he saith unto me, See thou do it not. I am ^e fellow-servant with thyself and thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God: for the ^f testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

^a cf. ch. 3. 4.
^{cb} Lk. 15.
22.
^c cf. Ps. 45. 13.
^a cf. Heb. 6.
10.
^{cf. 1} Tim. 2.
9, 10.
^b cf. Lk. 14.
15.
^c ch. 21. 5.
^{ch.} 22. 6.
^d ch. 22. 8, 9.
^e cf. Acts 10.
25, 26.
^e cf. Heb. 1.

14. ^f cf. Eph. 1. 9, 10; ^{cf. 1} Pet. 1. 10-12.

completed when the glorified bodies of the saints were assumed, and they were caught up to meet Him in the air. The eyes from which nothing could be hid have already looked upon her, and pronounced her faultless: "Thou art all fair, My love: there is no spot in thee." What, then, can be wanting to hinder the marriage? A matter of divine government, not of divine acceptance; and this is the book of divine government. Earth's history has to be rehearsed, the account given, the verdict rendered, as to all "deeds done in the body." Every question that could be raised must find its settlement: the light must penetrate through and through, and leave no part dark. We must enter eternity with lessons all learnt, and God fully glorified about the whole course of our history.

What follows explains fully this matter of readiness: "And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the *righteous acts* of the saints." We see by the language that it is *grace* that is manifest in this award. We learn by a verse in the last chapter *how* grace has manifested itself: "Blessed are they that have *washed their robes* (R. V.), that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city." But what could wash deeds *already done*? Plainly no reformation, no "water-washing by the Word" (Eph. v. 26). The deed done cannot be undone; and no well-doing for the future can blot out the record of it. What, then, can wash such garments? Revelation itself, though speaking of another company, has already given us the knowledge of this: "They have washed their robes, and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb*" (chap. vii. 14). Thus the value of that precious blood is found with us to the end of time, and in how many ways of various blessing!

It is not, then, the best robe for the Father's house: *that* robe never needs washing. It is for the kingdom, for the world, in the governmental ways of God with men, that this fine linen is granted to the saints. Yet they take their place in it at the marriage supper of the Lamb; for Christ's love it is that satisfies itself with the recognition and reward of all that has been *done for love of Him*. This is what finds reward; and thus the hireling principle is set aside.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" Blessed indeed are they that are bidden *now*! Alas, they may despise the invitation. But how blessed are they who, when that day comes, are found among the bidden ones! I leave for the present the question of who exactly make up the company of those that form the Bride; but the Bride assuredly sits at the marriage supper, and the plural here is what one could alone expect in such an exclamation as this. There seems, therefore, no ground in such an expression for distinguishing separate companies as the Bride and the "friends of the Bridegroom." The latter expression is used by the Baptist in a very different application, as assuredly *he* had no thought of any bride save Israel.

"And he said unto me, These are the true words of God." Of such blessedness, it would seem, even the heart of the apostle needed confirmation. Then,

SECTION 4. (Chap. xix. 11-xx. 3.)
The prostration of the world-powers.

1 (xix. 11-16): The King of kings with the sceptre of righteousness.

1. AND I saw ⁹heaven opened, and behold, a ^hwhite horse; and he that sat upon him is called, 'Faithful and True; and in righteousness he judgeth and ^jmaketh war. And his ^keyes were as a flame of fire, and upon

g cf. Matt. 3. 16.
cf. Acts 7. 55. 56.
h *ctr.* ch. 6. 2.
cf. Ps. 45. 4.
ctr. Matt. 21. 2 5.
i *cf.* ch. 3. 7.
k ch. 1. 14.

14; ch. 1. 5. *j* *cf.* Ex. 15. 3; *cf.* Ps. 24. 8.

as if overcome by the rapture of the vision, "I fell down at his feet," says John, "to worship him. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not; I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

All prophecy owns thus and honors Jesus as its subject. All that own Him the highest only, the most earnestly refuse other honor than that of being servants together of His will and grace. How our hearts need to be enlarged to take in His supreme glory! and how ready are we in some way, if not in this, to share the glory which is His alone with some creature merely! Rome's coarse forms of worship to saints and angels is only a grosser form of what we are often doing, and for which rebuke will in some way come; for God is jealous of any impairment of His rights, and we of necessity put ourselves in opposition to the whole course of nature as we derogate from these. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Sec. 4.

We are now carried back to the earth, to see what in fact is mercy to the earth, in the complete humiliation of the power which has been so long holding it back from God, and therefore from blessing. For thus not only the "kings of the earth upon the earth" must be humbled, but he also who has assumed so long, and usurped with such apparent success, the title of "prince of this world." Isaiah sees along with him all his rebellious following, and thus speaks of "the host of the high ones that are on high;" but in Revelation, according to its manner, Satan himself stands for the whole of this. They are summed up in him whose will they have implicitly obeyed and been molded by. For those that have manifested most their independence of God only thus show, not their liberty, but their complete subservience to another, whose service has in it no freedom at all, but most degrading slavery. The "stronger than he" has now come, and he is cast down, although this does not even yet end his history. The full tale of creature mutability has not even yet been told, and therefore the full end is not yet reached. But Christ has come, and His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom: through all, the reins of His power are not yet relaxed.

1. The prophecy pauses not further now to dilate upon the blessing. There is needed work to be done before we can enter upon this; and the work is the "strange work" of judgment. The vision that follows is as simple as can be to understand, if there are no thoughts of our own previously in the mind to obscure and make it difficult. And this is the way in which constantly Scripture is obscured.

Revelation, as the closing book of the inspired Word, supposes indeed acquaintance with what has preceded it, and the links with other prophecy are here especially abundant. The kingdom of Christ is the final theme of the Old Testament, upon which all prophetic lines converge; and the judgment which introduces it is over and over again set before us. The appearing of the Lord, and His personal presence to execute this, are also so insisted on that nothing but the infatuation of other hopes could prevail to hide it from men's eyes. In the New Testament the same thing faces us continually. As we are not considering it for the first time here, it will be sufficient to examine what is in the passage before us, with whatever connection it may have with other scriptures, needful to bring out fully the meaning of it.

his head 'many diadems, and he hath a name written which ^mno one knoweth but he himself; and he was clothed with a garment ⁿdipped in blood; and his name is called The ^oWord of God. And the ^parmies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, ^qclothed with fine linen, white [and] pure. And out of his mouth goeth a ^rsharp [two-edged] * sword, that with it he may smite the nations; and he shall ^srule † them with

* Many omit. † Literally, "shepherd."

3. 13; cf 2 Thess. 1. 7-10; cf. Ps. 149. 6-9. q cf. ver. 8. r ver. 21; ch. 1. 16; cf. 2 Thess. 2. 8. s Ps. 2. 9; ch. 12. 5.

l cf. Heb. 2. 9.
cf. Eph. 1.
22.
m cf. vers.
13, 16.
cf. Matt. 11.
27.
cf. 1 Tim. 6.
16.
n cf. Is. 63. 2,
3.
o Jno. 1. 1.
p cf. Jude
14, 15.
cf. 1 Thess.

Heaven is seen opened, the prophet's standpoint being therefore now on earth, and a white horse appears, the familiar figure of war and victory. It is upon the Rider that our eyes are fixed. He is called "Faithful and True,"—known manifestly to be that,—and in righteousness He judges and wars; His warring is but itself a judgment. For this His eyes penetrate as a flame of fire; nothing escapes them. Many diadems—the sign of absolute authority—are on His head. And worthily, for His name in its full reality—name expressing (as always in Scripture) nature—is an incommunicable one, beyond the knowledge of finite creatures. But His vesture is dipped in blood, for already many enemies have fallen before Him. And His name is called—has been and is, as the language implies—"The Word of God." The Gospel of John shows us that in creation already He was acting as that; and now in judgment He is no less so.

Is this revealed name anything else than His incommunicable one? It would seem not. The thought would appear to be in direct refutation of the skeptical denial of the knowledge of the Infinite One as possible to man. We cannot know infinity, but we can know the One who is infinite—yea, know Him to be infinite: know His name, and not know His name. The infinite One, moreover, Christ is declared here to be—no inferior God, but the Highest.

In the power of this, He now comes forth; the armies that are in heaven following their white-horsed Leader, themselves also upon white horses, sharers with Him in the conflict and the victory, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. It is this fine linen which we have just seen as granted to the Bride, and which needed the blood of the Lamb to make it white. It is therefore undoubtedly the same company here as there; only here seen in a new aspect, even as the Lord Himself is seen in a new one. It is communion with Himself that is implied in this change of character. What He is occupied with, they are occupied with; what is His mind, is their mind: so, blessed be God, it will be entirely then. None then will be ignorant of His will; none indifferent or half-hearted as to it. Alas, *now* to how much of it are even the many willingly strangers! and it is the "willing ignorance" that is so invincible: for all else there is a perfect remedy in the word of God; but what for a back turned upon that Word?

The Lord comes, then, and all the saints with Him. How impossible to think of a providential coming merely here! "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear," says the apostle, "then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" he asks elsewhere. Judgment is now impending: "out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He may smite the nations." So Isaiah: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked" (chap. xi. 4). It needs but a word from Him to cause their destruction; while it is judgment no less *according* to His word: it is that long and oft-threatened, slow to come, but at last coming in the full measure of the denunciation. Patience is not repentance.

"And He shall rule them with an iron rod"—"shepherd" them, to use a scarcely English expression. This is, of course, the fulfilment of the prophecy

2 (xix. 17-21): The destruction of those who destroy the earth.

a rod of iron; and he treadeth the 'wine-press of the indignation of the wrath of God the Almighty. And he hath upon his garment and upon his thigh a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords.

2. And I saw an ^aangel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the ^bbirds that fly in mid-heaven, Come hither, gather yourselves to the ^cgreat supper of God, that ye may ^deat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of those that sit upon them, and the flesh of all men, ^efree and bond, and small and great. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies ^fgathered together to make war with him that sat upon the horse and his army. And the ^gbeast was taken, and with him the ^hfalse prophet who did signs before him, by which he led astray those that received the mark of the beast, and those that worshiped his image. The two were

t ch. 14. 20.
ls. 63. 3, 6.
cf. Matt. 21. 44.
u ch. 17. 14.
ch. 1. 5.
v cf. ch. 18. 1, etc.
w cf. Jer. 12. 9.
cf. Ezek. 39. 17-20.
cf. Lk. 17. 37.
x cfr. ver. 9.
cfr. Lk. 14. 16, etc.
cf. Is. 34. 6-7.
y cf. Dan. 7. 5.
cf. Ezek. 32. 21-31.
z cf. ch. 20. 12.
a cf. Ps. 2. 1, 2.
b ch. 13. 1, etc.
c ch. 13. 11, etc.

of the second psalm, and decides against the still retained "break them" of the Revised Version. It is the shepherd's rod—this rod of iron, used in behalf of the flock: as He says in Isaiah again, "The day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come; and I looked, and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore Mine own arm brought salvation unto Me; and My fury, it upheld Me" (chap. lxiii. 4, 5). This is distinctly in answer to the question, "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" and to which He answers, "I have trodden the wine-press alone." Here, also, "He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Would it be believed that commentators have referred this to the cross, and the Lord's own sufferings there? * And yet it is so; though the iron rod, with which the treading of the wine-press is associated in this place, is something that is promised to the overcomer in Thyatira (chap. ii. 27)—"To him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, even as I received of My Father." We have but, with an honest mind, to put a few texts together after this manner, and all difficulty disappears.

"And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written—King of kings, and Lord of lords."

2. Now, in terrible contrast to the invitation lately given to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, an angel standing in the sun bids the birds of the heaven to the "great supper of God," to feast upon earth's proudest, and all their following. Immediately after this, the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, are seen gathered together to make war against Him who sits upon the horse, and against His army. We are no doubt to interpret this according to the Lord's words to Saul of Tarsus—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" But we have seen the idol thrust into Jehovah's temple, and know well that Israel's persecutors rage openly against Israel's God. They are taken thus banded in rebellion, and judgment sweeps them down; the beast and the false prophet that wrought miracles before him (the antichristian second beast of the thirteenth chapter) being exempted from the common death, only to be cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, where at the end of the thousand years of the saints' reign with Christ we find them still.

* Where He was trodden down could not be the place where He treads down His adversaries, though their rejection of Him there is what calls for this judgment. The blood of Christ *now* speaks of better things than that of Abel; but when the day of grace is past, it will call for vengeance on those who despise it.—S. R.

cast ^d alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone; and the rest were ^e slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which [sword] proceeded out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

d cf. ch. 20. 10.
e cf. 2 Thess. 2. 8.
cf. Num. 16. 26-34.

3 (xx. 1-3):
The seal
upon
Satan.

3. And I saw an ^f angel coming down from heaven, having the ^g key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the ^h dragon, the ⁱ ancient serpent, which is the ^j devil and ^k Satan, and ^l bound

e cf. Ps 45.5.
f cf. ch. 12.7.
g cf. ch. 1.18.
h cf. ch. 9.1, 11.
i ch. 12.9.
j Gen. 3. 1.
k 1 Pet. 5. 8.

l cf. 2 Cor. 2. 3 with Matt. 16. 23. *l* cf. ch. 12. 12; cf. Matt. 12. 29 with Heb. 2. 14.

The vision is so clear in meaning that it really has no need of an interpreter; and we should remember this as to a vision, that it is not necessarily even symbolic, though symbols may have their place in it, as here with the white horses of that before us, while the horses whose flesh the birds eat are not at all so. The "beast and the kings of the earth" furnish us with the same juxtaposition of figure and fact, the figure not at all hindering the general literality of fact. In these prophecies of coming judgment, the mercy of God would not permit too thick a veil over the solemn truth. This is the end to which the world is hastening now, and God is proportionally taking off the veil from the eyes upon which it has been lying, that there may be a more urgent note of warning given as it draws nigh. "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

3. The judgment upon living men is followed by that upon Satan their prince, though not yet is it final judgment. This partial dealing with the great deceiver means that the end of man's trial is not even yet reached. He is shut up in the abyss, or bottomless pit, of which we have read before, but not in hell (the lake of fire). As restraint, it is complete; and with the devil, the host of fallen angels following him share his sentence. This is not merely an inference, however legitimate. Isaiah has long before anticipated what is here, as we have seen (chap. xxiv. 21-23) "And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days they shall be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed; for the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously."

Here the contemporaneous judgment of men and angels at the beginning of the Millennium is clearly revealed, and just as clearly that it is not yet final. The vision in Revelation is also clear. The descent of the angel with the key and chain certainly need not obscure the meaning. Nor could the shutting up of Satan mean anything less than the stoppage of all temptation for the time indicated. The "dragon," too, is the symbol for the explanation of which we are (as in the twelfth chapter) referred to Eden, "the ancient serpent," and then are told plainly, "who is the devil and Satan." It is simply inexcusable to make the interpretation of the symbol still symbolic, and to make the greater stand for the less—Satan the symbol of an earthly empire, or anything of the sort. What plainer words could be used? which Isaiah's witness also abundantly confirms. God has been pleased to remove all veil from His words here, and it does look as if only wilful perversity could misunderstand His speech.

That after all this he is to be let out to deceive the nations is no doubt, at first sight, hard to understand. It is all right to inquire reverently why it should be; and Scripture, if we have learnt Peter's way of putting it together,—no prophecy to be interpreted as apart from the general body of prophecy,—will give us satisfactory, if solemn, answer. The fact is revealed, if we could give no reason for it. Who are we, to judge God's ways? and with which of us must He take counsel? It should be plain that for a thousand years Satan's tempta-

him a ^mthousand years; and cast him into the ^aabyss, and shut him up, and set a ^oseal upon him, that he should ^plead astray the nations no more until the thousand years should be completed. After this he must be loosed a ^llittle season.

SUBDIVISION 7. (Chaps. xx. 4-xxii.)

The Consummation.

1 (xx. 4-6):
The first
resurrec-
tion and
reign of
the saints.

1. **A**ND I saw ^rthrones, and they sat on them, and ^ajudgment was given to them; and [I saw] the ^souls of those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and such as had not ^wor-

r cf. Dan. 7. 9 with Matt. 19. 28; *cf.* ch. 3. 21. *s* cf. 1 Cor. 6. 2, 3; *cf.* Dan. 7. 22; *cf.* Ps. 149. 6-9. *t* cf. ch. 6. 9-11. *u* ch. 13. 15-17; ch. 14. 9-13.

m cf. vers. 4, 5.
cf. Matt. 13. 41 with Ps. 101. 7, 8.
cf. Ps. 72. 5.
cf. Is. 65. 20, 22.
n ch. 9. 1, 2.
cf. ver. 10.
cf. Jude 6.
o cf. Dan. 6. 17.
cf. Matt. 27. 64-66.
p ver. 8.
cf. 2 Cor. 4. 4.
q ch. 12. 9.
cf. ver. 7.

tions cease upon the earth; and then they are renewed and successful—the nations are once more deceived.

What makes it so difficult to understand is, that many have a false idea of the millennial age, as if it were "righteousness *dwelling*" on the earth, instead of "righteousness *reigning*" over it. It is said indeed of Israel, after they are brought to God nationally, "My people shall be *all* righteous" (Isa. lx. 21); but that is not the general condition. The eighteenth psalm, speaking prophetically of that time, declares, "The strangers shall submit themselves unto Me," which in the margin is given as "lie," or "yield feigned obedience." They submit to superior power, not in heart, and so it is added, "The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places." (Comp. lxvi. 3; lxxxi. 15.) And Isaiah, speaking of the long length of years, says, "The child shall die a hundred years old," but adds, "and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed" (lxxv. 20). So Zechariah pronounces the punishment of those who do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the glorious King (xiv. 17).

The Millennium is not eternal blessedness; it is not the Sabbath, to which so many would compare it. It answers rather to the sixth day than the seventh—to the day when the man and woman (types of Christ and the Church) are set over the other creatures. The seventh is the type of the rest of God, which is the only true rest of the people of God (Heb. iv. 9). The Millennium is the last period of man's trial, and that is not rest: trial in circumstances the best that could be imagined—righteousness reigning, the course of the world changed, heaven open overhead, the earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, the history of past judgment to admonish for the future: the question will then be fully answered whether sin is the mere fruit of ignorance, bad government, or any of the accidents of life to which it is so constantly imputed. Alas, the issue, after a thousand years of blessing, when Satan is loosed out of his prison, will make all plain; the last lesson as to man will only then be fully learned!

SUBD. 7.

1. And now we have what requires more knowledge of the Word to understand it rightly; but here also, more distinctly than before, there are visions and the interpretation of the vision, so that we will be inexcusable if we confound them. The vision is of thrones, and people sitting on them, judgment (that is, rule) being put into their hands. "The souls of those beheaded for the witness of Jesus and the word of God" are another company separate from these, but now associated with them; and "those who have not worshiped the beast" seem to be still another. All these live and reign with Christ a thousand years, and the rest of the dead do not live till the thousand years are ended. That is the vision. The interpretation follows; "this," we are told, "is the first resurrection;" and that "blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection: upon these the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

shipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they ^vlived and ^wreigned with Christ a thousand years. The ^zrest of the dead lived not until the thousand years

v cf. 2 Tim. 2.

11.

cf. John 5.

28, 29.

w 2 Tim. 2.

12.

cf. Rom. 8. 17; cf. ch. 3. 21; cf. ch. 22. 5. x cf. ver. 12; chr. Lk. 14. 14.

We must look carefully at all this, and in its order. First, the thrones, and those sitting on them: there should be no difficulty as to who these are, for we have already seen the elders crowned and seated in heaven, and before that have heard the Lord promise the overcomer in Laodicea that he should sit with Him upon His throne. That being now set up upon the earth, we find the saints throned with Him. In the interpretation it is said they reign with Him ■ thousand years. The vision is thus far very simple.

Daniel has already spoken of these thrones: "I beheld," he says, "till the thrones were placed" (as the R. V. rightly corrects the common one) "and the Ancient of Days did sit" (chap. vii. 9). But there was then no word as to the occupants of the thrones. It is the part of Revelation to fill in the picture on its heavenly side, and to show us who these are. They are not angels, who, though there may be "principalities" among them, are never said to reign with Christ. They are redeemed men—the saints caught up at the descent of the Lord into the air (1 Thess. iv.), and who, as the armies that were in heaven, we have seen coming with the white-horsed King to the judgment of the earth.

This being so, it is evident that the "souls" next spoken of are a separate company from these, though joined to them as co-heirs of the kingdom. The folly that has been taught that they are "souls" simply, so that here we have a resurrection of *souls* and not of bodies,—together with that which insists that it is a resurrection of truths or principles, or of a martyr—"spirit,"—bursts like a bubble when we take into account the first company of living and throned saints. In the sense intended, Scripture never speaks of a resurrection of *souls*. "Soul" is here used for "person," as we use it still, and as Scripture often uses it; and the word "resurrection" is found, not in the vision, where its significance might be doubtful, but in the explanation, where we have no right to take it as other than literal. What is the use of explanation, except to explain?

The recognition of the first company here also removes another difficulty which troubled those with whom the "blessed hope" revived at the end of the eighteenth century—that the first resurrection consisted wholly of *martyrs*. The *second* company does indeed consist of these, and for an evident reason. They are those who, converted after the Church is removed to heaven, would have their place naturally in earthly blessing with Israel and the saved nations. Slain for the Lord's sake, during the tribulation following, they necessarily are deprived of this: only to find themselves, in the mercy of God, made to fill a higher place, and to be added, by divine power raising them from the dead, to the *heavenly* saints. How sweet and comforting this assurance as to the sufferers in ■ time of unequalled sorrow!

When we look further at this last company, we find, as already intimated, that it also consists of two parts: first, of those martyred in the time of the seals, and spoken of under the fifth seal; and secondly, the objects of the beast's wrath, as in chapter xiii. 7, 15. This particularization is a perfect proof of who are embraced in this vision, and that we must look to those first seen as sitting on the thrones for the whole multitude of the saints of the present and the past. To all of which it is added that "the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished"—when we find, in fact, the resurrection of judgment taking place (vers. 11–15). All ought to be simple, then. The "first resurrection" is a literal resurrection of all the dead in Christ from the foundation of the world; a certain group, which might seem not to belong to it, being specialized, as alone needing this. The first resurrection is "first" simply in

were completed. This is the "first resurrection: "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the "second death hath no authority, but they shall be "priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

cf. Ps. 32. 1 with John 11. 25, 26. *a* ver. 14; ch. 2. 11; *cf.* Rom. 6. 23; *cf.* 1 Cor. 15. 56; *cf.* 2 Tim. 2. 10. *b* ch. 1. 6; *cf.* 1 Pet. 2. 5, 9.

y *cf.* Phil. 3. 11.
cf. 1 Thess. 4. 16.
cf. 1 Cor. 15. 23, 51-57.
z *cf.* ch. 14. 13.

contrast with that of the wicked, having different stages indeed, but only one character: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection! upon such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

To suppose that this passage stands alone and unsupported in the New Testament is to be ignorant of much that is written. "Resurrection from the dead" as distinct from the general truth of "resurrection of the dead" is special New Testament truth. The Pharisees knew that there should be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust (Acts xxiv. 15); but when the Lord spoke of the Son of man rising from the dead, the disciples question among themselves what the rising from the dead could mean (Mark ix. 9, 10). Christ's own resurrection is the pattern of the believer's. The "order" of the resurrection is distinctly given us: "Christ the first-fruits; afterward *they that are Christ's* at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23): not a general, but a selective resurrection. Such was what the apostle would by any means gain: not, as in the common version, "the resurrection of" but "the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. iii. 11).

In his epistle to the Thessalonians the same apostle instructs us more distinctly as to it, speaking in the way of special revelation by "the word of the Lord:" "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent"—or, as the R. V., "precede"—"them that are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15-17). Thus, before He appears shall His saints be with Him; and of course, long before the resurrection of the lost.

But the Lord Himself has given us, in His answer to the Sadducees, what most clearly unites with this vision in Revelation (Luke xx. 34-36). They had asked Him, of one who had married seven brethren, "whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?" meaning, of course, to discredit it by the suggestion. "And Jesus said unto them, The children of this world marry and are given in marriage; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

Clearly this asserts the fact, and gives the character of the special resurrection which the vision here describes. It is one which we must be "accounted worthy" to obtain, not one which nobody can miss; it is grace that acts in giving any one his place in it. Those who have part in it are by that fact proclaimed to be "the children of God;" thus again showing that it cannot be a general one. They die no more; that is (as here), they are not hurt of the second death. They are equal to the angels: above the fleshly conditions of this present life. Finally, it is the resurrection from the dead, not of the dead merely. All this is so plain that there should be no possibility of mistaking it, one would say; and yet it is no plainer than this scene in Revelation.

How dangerous must be the spell of a false system, which can so blind the eyes of multitudes of truly godly and otherwise intelligent persons to the plain

2 (xx. 7-15):
The second
death.

2. And when the thousand years shall be completed, Satan shall be ^cloosed out of his prison, and shall go forth to ^dlead astray the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, ^eGog and Magog, to gather them together unto the ^fwar, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the ^gcamp of the saints and the ^hbeloved city; and ⁱfire came down [from God] * out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that

c ver. 3.
cf. 2 Chron.
32. 31 with
Dan. 5. 27.
d cf. John 3.
7.
ctr. 1 John
5. 18.
e ctr. Ezek.
38. 2, etc.
f cf. Rom. 8.
7.
g cf. Isa. 26.
10.
h cf. Ezek.
38. 9, 16.
i ctr. ch. 13. 13;

* Some omit.

cf. Isa. 8. 8; cf. Isa. 59. 19. h cf. Ezek. 48. 35; cf. Hos. 2. 19; cf. Isa. 62. 1-5. i ctr. ch. 13. 13;
cf. Gen. 19. 24 with Ps. 11. 6.

meaning of such scriptures as these: and how careful should we be to test everything we receive by the Word, which alone is truth! Even the "wise" virgins slumbered with the rest; which shows us also, however, that error is connected with a spiritual condition, even in saints themselves. May we be kept from all that would thus cloud our perception of what, as truth, alone has power to bless and sanctify the soul!

2. Of the millennial earth, not even the slightest sketch is given us here. The book of Revelation is the closing book of prophecy, with the rest of which we are supposed to be familiar; and it is the *Christian* book, which supplements it with the addition of what is heavenly. Thus the reign of the heavenly saints has just been shown us: for details as to the earth, we must go to the Old Testament.

In the Millennium, the heavenly is displayed in connection with the earthly. The glory of God is manifested, so that the earth is filled with the knowledge of it as the waters cover the sea. Righteousness rules, and evil is afraid to lift its head. The curse is taken from the ground, which responds with wondrous fruitfulness. Amid all this, the spiritual condition is by no means in correspondence with the outward blessing. Even the manifest connection of righteousness and prosperity cannot avail to make men love righteousness; nor the goodness of God, though evidenced on every side, to bring men to repentance. At the "four corners of the earth," retreating as far as possible from the central glory, there are still those who represent Israel's old antagonists, and thus are called by their names "Gog and Magog." Nor are they remnants, but masses of population, brought together by sympathetic hatred of God and His people—crowding alike out of light into the darkness: a last and terrible answer to the question, "Lord, what is man?"

The "Gog, of the land of Magog," whose invasion of Israel is prophetically described in the book of Ezekiel (xxxviii., xxxix.), is the prototype of these last invaders. There need be no confusion, however, between them; for the invasion in Ezekiel is premillennial, not postmillennial, as that in Revelation is. It is then that Israel are just back in their land (xxxviii. 14), and from that time God's name is known in Israel, and they pollute His holy name no more (xxxix. 7). The nations too learn to know Him (xxxviii. 16, 23). There needs, therefore, no further inquiry to be sure that this is not after a thousand years of such knowledge.

But Gog and Magog here follow in the track of men who have long before made God known in the judgment He executed—follow them in awful, reckless disregard of the end before them. This is clearly due to the loosing once more of Satan. While he was restrained, the evil was there, but cowed and hidden. He gives it energy and daring. They go up now on the breadth of the earth—from which for the moment the divine shield seems to be removed, and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. The last is of course the earthly Jerusalem. The "camp of the saints" seems to be that of the heavenly saints, who are the Lord's host around it. The city is of course impregnable:

led them astray was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the ^abeast and the false prophet [are]; and they shall be ^tormented day and night to the ^ages of ages. And I saw a great ^awhite throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face ^ofled away the earth and the heaven, and no place was found for them.

cf. Mk. 9. 48; *cf.* Lk. 16. 26; *cf.* Matt. 25. 46. *n* *ctr.* Heb. 4. 16; *ctr.* 2 Cor. 5. 10; *ctr.* Matt. 25. 31. *o* *cf.* Ps. 102. 26; *cf.* Hab. 3. 6.

j *ver.* 14.
cf. Matt. 25.
41.
k *ch.* 19. 20.
l *cf.* Matt. 8.
29.
ch. 14. 11.
m *cf.* 2 Thes.
1. 9.

the rebels are taken in the plain fact of hostility to God and His people; and the judgment is swift and complete: "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." The wicked are extinct out of the earth.

The arch-rebel now receives final judgment. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are; and they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of ages."

These words deserve most solemn consideration. They are plain enough indeed; but what is there from which man will not seek to escape when his will is adverse? The deniers of eternal punishment, both on the side of restitution and that of annihilation, are here confronted with a plain example of it. Two human beings cast in alive into the lake of fire a thousand years before are found there, at the close of this long period still in existence! How evident that this fire is not, therefore, like material fire, but something widely different! All the arguments as to the action of fire in consuming what is exposed to it are here at once shown to be vain. That which can remain a thousand years in the lake of fire unconsumed may remain, so far as one can see, forever; and it is forever that they here are plainly said to be tormented.

But it is objected that there is, in fact, no verb here: the sentence reads simply, "where the beast and the false prophet," and that to fill up the gap properly we must put "*were cast*," which would say nothing about continuance. But what, then, about the concluding statement, "*and they*"—for it is a plural—"and they shall be tormented day and night for the ages of ages"?

Finding this argument vain, or from the opposite interest of restitution, it is urged that "day and night" do not exist in eternity. But we are certainly brought here to eternity, and "for the ages of ages" means nothing else. It is the measure of the life of God Himself (iv. 10). No passage that occurs, even to the smoke of Babylon ascending up, can be shown to have a less significance.

Growing desperate, some have ventured to say that we should translate "*till* the ages of ages." But the other passages stand against this with an iron front, and forbid it. We are, in this little season, right on the verge of eternity itself. The same expression is used as to the judgment of the great white throne, which is *in* eternity. It will not do to say of God that He lives to the ages of ages, and *not through* them. The truth is very plain, then, that the punishment here decreed to three transgressors is, in the strictest sense, eternal.

Whether the same thing is true of all the wicked dead, we now go on to see.

The Millennium is over: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every one according to their works. And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

This is the judgment of the dead alone, and must be kept perfectly distinct in our minds from the long previous judgment of the *living*. The judgment in Matt. xxv., for example, where the "sheep" are separated from the "goats,"

And I saw the ^pdead, ^qgreat and small, standing before the throne, and ^rbooks were opened; and ^sanother book was opened which is [the book] of life; and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books, ^taccording to their works. And the ^usea gave up the dead that were in it; and ^vdeath and ^whades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged ^xeach one according to their works. And death and hades were ^ycast into the lake of fire. This is the

p cf. ver. 5.
q cf. ver. 5.
r cf. Acts 10.
42.
s cf. Acts 24.
15.
t cf. ch. 11.18.
u cf. Ex. 12.
29.
v cf. Ps. 49.2.
w cf. Dan. 7.
10.
x cf. Matt. 12.
36.

y Phil. 4. 3; *z* cf. Lk. 10. 20; *ctr.* ch. 3. 1, 5. *t* Matt. 16. 27; *cf.* Rom. 2. 12, 16. *u* cf. Ex. 14. 28; *ctr.* ch. 21. 1. *v* ch. 1. 18; ch. 6. 8; *cf.* John 5. 28, 29. *w* cf. Lk. 16. 23. *x* cf. Rom. 14. 12; *cf.* Gal. 6. 5. *y* ch. 21. 8.

is a judgment of the living—of the nations upon earth when the Lord comes. It is not, indeed, the warrior-judgment of those taken with arms in their hands, in open rebellion, which we have beheld in the premillennial vision. The nations are gathered before the Son of man, who has just come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him; and that coming, as when elsewhere spoken of throughout the prophecy, is unquestionably premillennial. As mankind are divided into three classes, “the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God,” so the prophecy in relation to the Jew is to be found in chapter xxiv. 1-42; that in relation to the professing church, to the 30th verse of the next chapter; and the rest of it gives us the sessional judgment of the Gentiles, so far as they have been reached by the everlasting gospel. The judgment is not of all the deeds done in the body: it is as to how they have treated the brethren of the Lord (ver. 40) who have been among them, evidently as travelers, in rejection and peril. The Jewish point of view of prophecy as a whole clearly points to Jewish messengers who as such represent Israel’s King (comp. Matt. x. 40). There is not a word about resurrection of the dead, which the time of this judgment excludes the possibility of, as to the wicked. It is one partial as to its range, limited to that of which it takes account, and in every way distinct from such a *general* judgment as the large part of Christendom even yet looks for.

Here in the vision before us there is simply the judgment of the dead; and although the word is not used, the account plainly speaks of resurrection. The sea gives up the dead which are in it, as well as, by implication, also the dry land. Death, as well as hades, deliver up what they respectively hold; and as hades is unequivocally the receptacle of the soul (Acts ii. 27), so must “death,” on the other hand, which the soul survives (Matt. x. 28), stand here in connection with that over which it has supreme control—the body.

The dead, then, here rise; and we have that from which the “blessed and holy” of the first resurrection are delivered—the “resurrection of judgment” (John v. 29, R. V.). From *personal* judgment the Lord expressly assures us that the believer is exempt (John v. 24, R. V.). Here, not only are the *works* judged, which will be true of the believer also, and for lasting blessing to him, but *men* are judged *according to their works*—a very different thing. Such a judgment will allow of no hope for the most upright and godly among mere men.

And this would seem to show that, though a millennium has passed since the first resurrection, yet no *righteous* dead can stand among this throng. The suggestion of the “book of life” has seemed to many to imply that there are such; but it is not said that there are, and the words “whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” may be simply a solemn declaration (now affirmed by the result) that grace is man’s only possible escape from the judgment. May it not even be intended to apply more widely than to the dead here, and take in the *living* saints of the Millennium negatively, as showing how, in fact, they are not found before this judgment-seat?

At any rate, the principle of judgment—“according to their works”—seems to exclude absolutely any of those saved by grace. And there are intimations

3 (xxi. 1-5):
The tabernacle of
God with
men.

*second death, the lake of fire. And if any one was not *found written in the book of life, he was ^bcast into the lake of fire.

3. And I saw a *new heaven and a new earth; for the
*first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and

d cf. Heb. 12. 26, 27; cf. ch. 20. 11; cf. 2 Pet. 3. 10-12.

*z cf. ver. 6.
a cf. John 3.
36.*

*b cf. Matt.
13. 42, 50.*

*c 2 Pet. 3. 13.
cf. 1s. 65. 17.*

cf. 1s. 66. 22.

also, in the Old Testament prophecies, as to the extension of life in the Millennium, which seem well to consist with the complete arrest of death for the righteous during the whole period. If "as the days of a tree shall be the days of God's people" (Isa. lxxv. 22), and he who dies at a hundred years dies as a child yet, and for wickedness—because there shall be no more any one, apart from this, that shall not fill his days (ver. 20)—it would almost seem to follow that there is no death. And to this the announcement as to the "sheep" in the judgment-scene in Matthew, that "the righteous shall go away into life eternal," strikingly corresponds. For to go into life eternal is not to possess life in the way that we at present may; in fact, as "righteous" they already did this: it means apparently nothing less than the complete canceling of the claim of death in their case.

And now death and hades are cast into the lake of fire—that is, those who dwell in them are cast there. These exist, as it were, but in those who fill them; and thus we learn that there is no exemption or escape from the last final doom for any who come into this judgment. The lake of fire is the *second* death. The first terminated in judgment man's career on earth; the second closes the intermediate state in their judged alienation from the Source of life. The first is but the type of the second. As we have seen, it is not extinction at all; and indeed a resurrection merely for the sake of suffering before another extinction would seem self-contradictory. In fact, death—what we ordinarily call that—is now destroyed. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," which is thenceforth, therefore, undying (Heb. ix. 27).

With the great white throne set up, the earth and the heavens pass away, and there come into being "a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii. 13).

3. Before the face of Him who sits upon the great white throne "the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them" (chap. xx. 11). We have now a complementary statement: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." It is clear, therefore, that an earthly condition abides for eternity. It is a point of interest as to which Scripture seems to give full satisfaction, whether this new earth is itself a "new creation," or the old earth remodeled and made new. At first sight, one would no doubt decide for the former; and this was the view that at one time almost held possession of the field, the new earth scarcely being regarded by the mass as "earth" at all. Practically, the earth was simply believed to exist no more; and in contrast with it, all was to be heavenly: the double sphere of blessing; earth *and* heaven, was lost sight of, if not denied.

Lately, for many, reaction has set in, and the pendulum has swung past the point of rest to the other extreme. The prophecies of the Old Testament rightly understood as to be literally taken, and delivered from the glosses of a falsely called "spiritual" interpretation, seem to agree with the apostle Peter and the book of Revelation in making the earth to be the inheritance of the saints—the earth in a heavenly *condition*, brought back out of its state of exile, and into true relation with the rest of the family of heaven, not alienated from their original place. Contrast between earth and heaven as an eternal existence was again, but from the other side of it, denied.

The whole web and woof of Scripture is against either of these confusions: the point of rest can only be in accepting the distinction of earthly from heav-

only as fundamental to all right understanding of the prophetic Word. The Old Testament "promises" which have in view the earth as a sphere of blessing, are, as the apostle declares (Rom. ix. 1-4), Jewish, not Christian. The New Testament emphasizes that the blessings of the Christian are in "heavenly places" (Eph. i. 3); nor can this last possibly apply to the *earth made heavenly*. The Lord has left us with the assurance (John xiv.) that in His Father's house are many mansions,—permanent places of abode,—that He was going to prepare a place there for us, and that He will come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. As well assure us that the Lord's permanent abode is to be on earth, and not in heaven, as that our own is to be here, not there.

Each line of truth must have its place if we are to be "rightly dividing the word of truth." The heavenly "bride of the Lamb" is not the earthly; "Jerusalem which is above" is not the Palestinian city; the "Church of first-born ones who are written in *heaven*" are not that "Israel" declared God's "first-born" as to the earth; the promise of the "Morning Star" is not the same as that of the "Sun of Righteousness," although Christ is assuredly both of these. Discernment of such differences is a necessity for all true filling of our place, and practical rendering of Christian life.

Let us look now, however, at the question of continuity between the earth that flees away and the earth that succeeds it. At first sight we should surely say they cannot be identical. The well-known passage in the epistle of Peter would seem to confirm this (2 Peter iii. 10, 12). There we learn that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." And it is repeated, and thus emphasized by repetition, that "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

Yet, as we look more closely, we shall find reason to doubt whether more is meant than the destruction of the earth as the place of human habitation. In the Deluge, to which it is compared (vers. 5-7), "the world that *then* was perished;" yet its continuity with the present no one doubts. Fire, though the instrument of a more penetrating judgment, yet does not annihilate the material upon which it fastens. The melting even of elements implies rather the reverse, and dissolution is not (in this sense) destruction.

Yet the heavens and the earth pass away—that is, in the form in which now we know them; or, as the apostle speaks to the Corinthians, "the *fashion* of this world passes away" (1 Cor. vii. 31); and that this is the sense in which we are to understand it, other scriptures come to assure us.

A new earth does not necessarily mean *another* earth, except as a "new" man means another man—"new" in the sense of renewed. And even the words here, "there was no more sea," naturally suggest another state of the earth than now exists. This fact is a significant one: that which is the type of instability and barrenness, and condemns to it so large a portion of the globe, is gone utterly and forever. At the beginning of Genesis we find the whole earth buried under it; emerging on the third day, and the waters given their bounds, which but once afterward they pass. Now they are gone forever, as are the wicked, to whom Isaiah compares it: "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." This last is the effect of chafing against its bounds, as "the mind of the flesh" is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. viii. 7).

These analogies cannot fail to illustrate another which the Lord Himself gives us, when He speaks of the millennial kingdom as the "regeneration"—"ye who have followed Me in the *regeneration*, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix. 28). Here let us note that it is the Lord's *kingdom*

there is ^cno more sea. And I saw the ^fholy city, new Jerusalem, ^gcoming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a ^hbride adorned for her husband. And I heard

e cf. Gen. 1.2, 9.
cf. Is. 57. 20.
cf. Ps. 107. 25, 26.

f ch. 22. 19; vers. 10, 27. *g* ch. 3. 12. *h* ch. 19. 7, 8; *cf.* Eph. 5. 25-27; *cf.* Ps. 45. 13-15.

that is the regeneration of the earth. That reign of righteousness which is the effectual curb upon human wickedness, not the removal of it, answers thus to what "regeneration" is for him who is in this sense in the Lord's kingdom now. Sin is not removed; the flesh abides even in the regenerate; but it has its bound—it does not reign, has not dominion. In the perfect state, whether for the individual or the earth, righteousness *dwells*, as Peter says of the latter: sin exists no more. How striking does the analogy here become when we remember that the change, perhaps dissolution, of the body comes between the regenerate and the perfect state, just as the similar "dissolution" of the earth does between the Millennium and the new earth! Surely this throws a bright light upon the point we are examining.

The new heavens are, of course, only the *earth*-heavens, the work of the second of the six days. They are of great importance to the earth which they surround and to which they minister. More and more is science coming to recognize how (in natural law at least) "the heavens rule." Yet, who but an inspired writer, of the time of Peter or John, would have made so much of the new heavens? And these only, as Peter reminds us, develop a much earlier "promise." This we find in Isa. lxx. and lxxi., a repeated announcement, the second time explicitly connected with the continuance of Israel's "seed" and "name": "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall abide before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." Thus, even in the new earth there will be no merging of Israel in the general mass of the nations. The first-born people written on earth will show still how "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," as will the "Church of the first-born who are written in heaven." These different circles of blessing, like the principalities and powers in heavenly places, are quite accordant with what we see everywhere of God's manifold ways and ranks in creation. Why should eternity efface these differences, which of course do not touch the unity of the family of God as such, while they are abiding witnesses of divine mercy in relation to a past of which the lessons are never to be lost?

Earth, then, itself remains, but a "new" earth; and, as the seal upon its eternal blessedness, "I saw," says the prophet-evangelist, "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God." Here is the promise in Immanuel's name made finally good to the redeemed race: and he who is privileged to show us the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, tabernacling among men when the Word was made flesh, is the one who shows us the full consummation. Of the new Jerusalem we have presently a detailed account; here, what is emphasized is, that it is the link between God and men; God Himself is with men, in all the fulness of blessing implied in that.

We must not, however, pass over anything: the less even that is said, the more should we ponder that which *is* said. Let us see, then, what is here, putting it in connection with what seems most naturally to throw light upon it elsewhere. Standing where we are,—at the end of time,—we stand, indeed, whither the whole stream of time has been conducting us, and therefore with the countless voices of the past sounding prophetically to us. What will it be to be actually there, at the end of the ways which, though through the valley of Baca, lead up to the city of God!

First, here, we are shown that He has prepared for us a city—"the holy city." The new Jerusalem is surely, what its earthly type is, a "city of habitation:"

a 'great voice out of the throne,* saying, Behold the 'tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them; and they shall be *his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God. And he shall 'wipe away every tear from their eyes. And there shall be "no more death, nor "sorrow, nor crying, nor shall there be any more 'pain; for the 'former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make 'all things new. And he saith,† Write: for these words are 'faithful and true.

* Some read, "heaven." † Many MSS. insert, "to me."

o cfr. Rom. 8. 18-23. p cfr. 2 Cor. 4. 17, 18. q ver. 1; cfr. 2 Cor. 5. 17. r ch. 22. 6; cfr. ch. 19. 11 with 2 Cor. 1. 20.

i ch. 19. 1.
j cfr. Lev. 26.
11, 12.
cf. Is. 4. 5.
cf. John 17.
24.
k ch. 7. 15.
l 1 Pet. 2. 10.
l cfr. ch. 7. 17.
cfr. 2 Cor. 5.
2.
m cfr. 1 Cor.
15. 26, 54.
cfr. Rom. 5.
17.
n cfr. 1 Thes.
4. 13, 18.
cfr. Job. 14.
1.

it is not simply a figure for the saints themselves. The patriarchs of old, content to await in patient faith the end of their pilgrim-journey, "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;" and He will not disappoint their expectations—"He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 10, 16). At the very beginning of the world's history we find in one who manifested a totally opposite spirit, still the desire of the human heart which this promise meets. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, fugitive and vagabond as he was, to build a city. Without faith or patience, he only shows the natural craving of the heart, but not in itself evil because natural. Ever since, the history of man has connected itself mainly with its cities. From Babel on to Rome, these have been the centres of power and progress ever, and (the world being what it is) they have exhibited in the most developed way its opposition to God. But God too has His city, and makes much of it, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," and with it associates (Psa. lxxxvii.) the one great Name which eclipses that of all others.

The tendency of the day is toward cities, and in these, for good or for ill, we find the greatest development of man; only, man being fallen, the development is monstrous. When the day of the Lord has put down, however, all human thoughts, it is only to exalt Jerusalem upon the earth, and to make way for the display of that better Jerusalem that is here before us.

The city is the expression of human need, and the provision for it. In the midst of strife and insecurity, men gather together for protection; but that is only a small part of what is implied in it. There are other needs more universal than this, as that of co-operation, the division of labor, the result of that inequality of aptitudes by which God has made us mutually dependent. Our social nature is thus met, and there are formed and strengthened the ties by which the world is bound together; while the intercourse of mind with mind, of heart with heart, stimulates and develops every latent faculty. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Prov. xxvii. 17).

The eternal city implies for us association, fellowship, intercourse, the fullness of what was intimated in the primal saying, "It is not good for man to be alone," but which in respect of the bride-city, which this is, has still a deeper meaning. Here, the relationship of the saint to Christ, who as the Lamp of divine glory enlightens it, alone adequately explains all. "Alone" we can nevermore be. "With Him" our whole manhood shall find its complete answer, satisfaction, and rest.

This is necessarily, therefore, the "holy city." Cain's has but too much characterized every city hitherto. Where shall we find, as in the city, the reek of impurity and the hotbed of corruption? There poverty and riches pour out a common flood of iniquity, out of which comes, ever increasing, the defiant cry of despair. But here at last is a "HOLY CITY," the new Jerusalem, "foundation of peace:" not, like Babel of old, towering up to heaven, but coming down

4 (xxi. 6-8):
The universal test.

4. And he said unto me, "It is done. I am the 'Alpha and the Omega, the "beginning and the end. I will "give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that "overcometh shall inherit these things, and I will be "his God, and he shall be my son. But for the "cowardly, and "faithless, and "abominable, and "murderers, and "fornicators, and "sorcerers, and "idolaters, and all "liars, their part shall be in the "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

s cf. ch. 11. 15.
cf. John 19. 30.
t ch. 1. 8.
ch. 22. 13.
u cf. John 1. 1 with Eph. 1. 10.
v ch. 22. 17.
cf. John 4. 10.
w ch. 2. 7, etc.
x ver. 3.
y ch. 22. 15.
ctr. 2 Tim. 1. 7.
z ctr. Heb. 10. 39.
a cf. 1 Pet. 4. 3.
b cf. ch. 17. 4.
c cf. ch. 18. 24.

5 (xxi. 9-xxii. 5):
The new Jerusalem, in which is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

5. And there came "one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the "bride, the Lamb's wife. And he "carried me away in

e cf. ch. 17. 2. d cf. ch. 18. 23. e cf. ch. 13. 14, 15. f cf. 1 John 2. 22. g ch. 20. 15; ch. 19. 20. h ctr. ch. 17. 1, etc. i cf. ch. 19. 7; cf. ver. 2. j ch. 17. 3.

from heaven, the way of all good, of all blessing for men. The tabernacle of God is with men. God Himself tabernacles with them.* His own hand removes every trace of former sorrow, every effect of sin. His own voice proclaims what His hand accomplishes: "Behold, I make all things new." Here, that we may be fully assured, a confirmatory word is added.

4. And along with this, and in view of it, in the name of Him who is Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, the sweet invitation of the gospel is once more published, the free gift of the water of life to every thirsty soul is certified, and the inheritance to the overcomer, for it is reached by the way of conflict and of triumph—grace securing, not evading, this: "He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God; and he shall be My son."

Just here, too, with no less earnestness, and in eternity, past all the change of time, the doom of the wicked is pronounced: "But the fearful,"—too cowardly to take part with Christ in a world opposed to Him,—“and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

5. The last vision of Revelation is now before us: it is that of the city of God itself. But here, where one would desire above all to see clearly, we become most conscious of how feeble and dull is our apprehension of eternal things. They are words of an apostle which remind us that "we see through a glass darkly"—*en ainigmati*, in a riddle. Such a riddle, then, it is no wonder if the vision presents to us: the dream that we have here a literal description, even to the measurements, of the saints' eternal home, is one too foolish to need much comment. All other visions throughout the book have been symbolic: how much more here! how little need we expect that the glimpse which is here given us into the unseen would reveal to us the shape of buildings, or the material used! Scripture is reticent all through upon such subjects, and the impress to be left upon our souls is plainly spiritual, not of lines and hues, as for the natural senses. "Things which eye hath not seen" are not put before the eye.

On the other hand, that the "city" revealed to us here is not simply a figure of the saints themselves, as, from the term used for it, "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," some have taken it to be, there are other scriptures which seem definitely to assure us. "Jerusalem, which is above, which is our mother" (Gal. iv.), could hardly be used in this way, though the Church is indeed so con-

* Is there not in this word "tabernacle" the suggestion that any habitation of God with men must be in pure grace? He is infinitely sufficient unto Himself, and it is only in love that He dwells with men. On the other hand, this does not imply that there is anything temporary in the abiding. It is surely eternal, as Christ is eternally Man.—S. R.

ceived of in patristic and medieval thought. But even thus it would not be spoken of naturally as "above."

In Heb. xii. we have a still more definite testimony. For there the "Church of the first-born ones which are written in heaven," as well as "the spirits of just men made perfect,"—in other words, both Christians and the saints of the Old Testament,—are mentioned as distinct from "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" and this will not allow them to be the same thing; although, in another way, the identification of a city with its inhabitants is easy.

We are led in the same direction by the mention of the "tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God,"—the place to which the apostle thought he might have been caught, even bodily (2 Cor. xii.),—and here is the tree of life in the midst of the city, beside the "river of water of life" which flows from the throne of God! Figurative language all this surely; yet these passages combine to give us the thought of the heavenly abode, already existing, and which will be in due time revealed as the metropolis of the heavenly kingdom—what Jerusalem restored will be in the lower sphere. Indeed, the earthly here so parallels and illustrates the heavenly as to be a most useful help in fixing, if not enlarging, our thoughts about it—always while we realize, of course, the essential difference that Scripture itself makes clear to be between them. But this we shall have to look at as we proceed.

"The holy city, Jerusalem," is certainly intended to be a plain comparison with the earthly city. But that is the type only; this is the antitype, the true "foundation of peace," as the word means. What more comforting title, after all the scenes of strife, the fruit of the lusts that war in our members, which we have had to look upon! Here is "peace" at last, and on a foundation that shall not be removed, but that stands fast forever. For this is emphatically "the city that *hath* foundations," and "whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10). How blessed it is, too, that it should be just one of the seven angels that had the seven last plagues that shows John the city! for no mere executioner of judgment we see is he: judgment (as with God, for it is God's) is also *his* "strange work." It had to come, and it has come: there was no help, no hope without it; thus the stroke of the "rod of iron" was that of the shepherd's rod: it was the destruction of the destroyers only. But it is past, and here is the scene wherein his own heart rests, to which it returns with loyalty and devotion: here, where the water of life flows from the throne of God,—eternal, from the Eternal,—refreshment, gladness, fruitfulness and power are found in obedience.

But the city is the "Bride, the Lamb's wife." In the Old Testament, the figure of marriage is used in a similar way. Israel was thus Jehovah's "married wife" (Isa. liv. 1; Jer. xxxi. 32), now divorced indeed for her unfaithfulness, but yet to return (Hos. ii.), and be received and reinstated. Her Maker will then be once more her husband, and more than the old blessing be restored. In the forty-fifth psalm, Israel's King, Messiah, is the Bridegroom; the Song of Solomon is the mystic song of His espousals. Jerusalem thus bears His name: "This is the name whereby she shall be called: Jehovah our Righteousness" (Jer. xxxiii. 16, comp. xxiii. 6). The land, too, shall be "married" (Isa. lxii. 4).

In the New Testament, the same figure is still used in the same way. The Baptist speaks of his joy, as the "friend of the Bridegroom," in hearing the Bridegroom's voice (John iii. 29); and in the parable of the virgins (Matt. xxv.), where Christians are those who go forth to meet the Bridegroom, they are, by that very fact, not regarded as the Bride, which is still Israel (according to the general character of the prophecy), though not actually brought into the scene. Some may be able to see, also, in the marriage at Cana of Galilee (John ii. 1) the veiling of the same thought.

All this, therefore, is in that earthly sphere in which Israel's blessings lie; our

[the] Spirit to a mountain, great and high, and showed me the ^holy city, ^Jerusalem, ^{desc}ending out of heaven from God, having the ^{gl}ory of God. Her

k cf. ver. 27.

l cf. Gal. 4.

26.

cj. Heb. 12.

22.

m cf. Hos. 2. 21; ver. 23. n cf. Eph. 5. 27.

own are "in heavenly places" (Eph. i. 3), and here it is we find, not the Bride of *Messiah* simply, but distinctively "the Bride of the *Lamb*." The "*Lamb*," as a title, always keeps before us His death, and that by violence, "a *Lamb* as it had been slain" (Rev. v. 6); and it is thus that He has title to that redemption empire in which we find Him throughout this book. But "the Bride of the *Lamb*" is thus one espoused to Him in His rejection, sharer (though it be but in slight measure) of His reproach and sorrow, trained and disciplined for glory in a place of humiliation. And so it is said that "if *we suffer*, we shall also reign with Him;" and again, "If so be we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 17).

The saints in the Millennium have no heritage of suffering such as this; even those who pass through the trial which ushers it in have not the same character of it, although we must not forget those associated with the *Lamb* upon mount Zion, who illustrate the same truth, but upon a lower platform. Even these are not His Bride.

Ephesians, the epistle of the heavenly places, shows us the Church as Eve of the last Adam, whom Christ loves, and for whom He gave Himself. Formed out of Himself and for Himself, He now sanctifies and cleanses her with water-washing by the Word, that He may present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. In another aspect, this Church is His body, formed by the baptism of the Spirit as at Pentecost, complete when those who are Christ's are caught up to meet Him in the air. The doctrine of this is, of course, not in Revelation; the difficulty is in seeing the conformity of Revelation with it.

Outside of Revelation even, there is a difficulty in the connection (if there be, as one would anticipate, a connection) between the Church as the body of Christ now, before our presentation to Him, and the "one flesh" which is the fruit of marriage. Israel was the married wife, and will be, though now for a time "desolate," as one divorced. The Church is "espoused" (2 Cor. xi. 2), not married. Thus the "one body" and the "great mystery" of "one flesh," of which the apostle speaks (Eph. v. 29), must be distinct.

Looking back to Adam, to whom as a type he there refers us, we find that Eve is taken out of his side—is thus really his "flesh" by her very making. Thus, as one with him in nature, she is united to him—a union in which the prior unity finds its fit expression. The two things are therefore in this way very clearly and intimately connected. The being of Christ's body is that, then, which alone prepares and qualifies for the being of His Bride hereafter; and body and Bride must be strictly commensurate with each other.

The mystery here is great, as the apostle himself says; nor is it to be affirmed that the type in all its features answers to the reality. It is easily seen that this could not be; yet there is real correspondence and suitability thus far: according to it, the Church of Christ alone, from Pentecost to the rapture, is scripturally (in a strict sense) the "Bride of the *Lamb*."

Yet can we confine the new Jerusalem to these? There would, of course, in this case be no difficulty as to the character of a city which it is given in this vision. A city is commonly enough identified with its inhabitants, so that the same term covers both place and persons. But are none to inhabit the new Jerusalem except the saints of Christian times? Are none of these so illustrious in the Old Testament to find their place there? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are among those with whom the Lord assures us we are to sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke xiii. 28, 29);—are they to be outside the heavenly city?

This is positively answered otherwise, as it would seem, in Revelation itself.

°brightness was like that of a most precious stone, as it were a °jasper stone, clear as crystal. It had a °wall great and high, having twelve °gates, and at the gates, twelve °angels, and names written thereon, which are those of the twelve °tribes of the sons of Israel. On

o cf. ch. 22. 5. *cf.* John 17. 22. *p* cf. ch. 4. 3. with John 3. 2. *q* cf. ch. 22. 15. *cf.* Isa. 26. 1. *r* cf. Ps. 87. 2; *cf.* Ps. 127. 5. *s* cf. Heb. 12. 22. 23. *t* cf. Ezek. 48. 31-34.

For while the general account of those who enter there is that they are those "written in the Lamb's book of life" (xxi. 27), "without" the city are said to be only "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (xxii. 15).

In the eleventh of Hebrews, moreover, in a verse already quoted, "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," for which the patriarchs looked and waited, can surely be no other than that which we find here; and it is added that they desired "a better country—that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." It could not be the New Testament Church for which Abraham looked; for this was as yet entirely hidden in God (Eph. iii. 9). Another and larger meaning for the new Jerusalem must surely, therefore, be admitted.

And why should there not be in it an inclusion of both thoughts? Why should it not be the *Bride-city*, named from the *Bride-Church*, whose home it is, and yet containing other occupants? This alone would seem to cover the whole of the facts which Scripture gives us as to it; and the Jewish Bride is in like manner sometimes a wider, sometimes a narrower conception; sometimes the city Jerusalem, sometimes the people Israel. Only that in the Old Testament the city is the narrower, the people the wider view; while in the New Testament this is reversed. And even this may be significant: the heavenly city, the dwelling-place of God, permitting none of the redeemed to be outside it, but opening its gates widely to all. A *Bride-city* indeed, ever holding bridal festival, and having perpetual welcome for all that come: its freshness never fading, its joy never satiating; blessed are they whose names are written there!

As before, the city is seen "descending out of heaven from God." We shall find, however, here, that the present vision goes back of the new heavens and earth to the millennial age—that is, that while itself eternal, the city is seen in connection with the earth at this time. Not yet has it been said, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them." The descending city is not, therefore, in that settled and near intimacy with men outside of it in which it will be. A significant and perfect note of time it is that the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of nations (xxii. 2). Tender as this grace is, the condition it shows could not be eternal.

All the nearer does it bring this vision of glory and of love, no more to be banished or dimmed by human sin or sorrow. The city has the glory of God; and here is the goal of hope, complete fruition of that which but as hope outshines all that is known of brightness elsewhere. It cannot be painted with words. We cannot hope even to expand what the Holy Ghost has given us. But the blessedness itself we are soon to know.

The holy city descends from heaven, "having the glory of God." She is the chosen vessel of it, to display it to the universe, being the fruit of Christ's work, the fullest witness of abounding grace. Her shining is "like a most precious stone, as a crystal-like jasper-stone," or diamond, as we have already taken it to be.* The carbon crystallized into this lustrous brilliant, which still shines with a light not its own, is a fit representation of the "glory" that is to be "in the Church in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages" (Eph. iii. 21). This glory which God manifests through His creatures, He manifests to His creatures, satisfying His own love in bringing them thus nigh unto Himself. How blessed to be a means of such display!

* See on chap. iv. 3.

the "east three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve "foundations, and upon them twelve names of the twelve "apostles of the Lamb.

And he that spake with me had a golden *measuring reed, that he might measure the city, and its gates, and its wall. And the city lieth "foursquare, and its length is as much as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the "length

u cf. Matt. 8.
11.
v cf. Heb. 11.
10.
w cf. Eph. 2.
20.
cf. Lk. 22, 29,
30.
x cf. ch. 11. 1.
cf. Ezek. 40.
2, etc.
y cf. 1 Ki. 6.
20.
z cf. 1 Ki. 6.
20.

The wall of the city clearly speaks of its security: it has "a great and high wall;" for "salvation hath God appointed as walls and bulwarks" (Isa. xxvi. 1). And in the wall, which has 4 sides, there are 12 gates, 3 gates on every side, for egress and ingress—home, as this is, of a life which is unceasing activity. The number 12 is upon all the city, 12 being an expanded 7, with the same factors (4×3 instead of $4 + 3$), and the symbol of manifest divine government, God being here manifestly supreme. This is perfection in its deepest analysis; and the numbers are thus one in fact. The 12 here is the usual 4×3 ; the 3 still speaking of divine manifestation, while the 4 shows it to be universal, the sides facing also every way.

At the gates are 12 angels; upon them the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. As the tabernacle of God, a reference to the tabernacle of old is surely in place here, though to that there was but one entrance, for a simple and beautiful reason, Christ being seen in it as the only way of approach to God. Now there are 12 gates, answering to the 12 tribes, which in the wilderness also were grouped in similar 3s around the tabernacle. Ezekiel, in his last vision of the future (chap. xlviii.), shows us what more exactly answers to what is here, though speaking of the earthly city restored, and not the heavenly; and there the gates are appropriated, one to each particular tribe. Israel are here, as it would seem, their own representatives, as in the vision of the seventh chapter; and we are reminded of their being in nearest connection upon earth with the heavenly city. In the heavenly sphere, at the gates are angels. The heavenly and earthly relations of the city are thus declared.

There are 12 foundations of the wall of the city also; but on these are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They have *laid* the foundations, and their names are stamped upon their work. We are surely not to imagine any individualizing here, as if any one foundation could be appropriated to any one apostle, or indeed that the number 12 itself is anything but characteristic. This connects itself also with the question of the presence or absence of Paul's name from the number. It is remarkable that almost the same difficulty connects with the 12 tribes of Israel, which often exclude and often include the tribe of Levi. Taking Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of Joseph, as tribal heads, equal in this respect to Jacob's other sons, (and this is the place that they are given in the history,) yet they are none the less always counted 12. Why may not the apostles, in spite of the addition of Paul to their number, be counted here as 12?*

The measurements of the city and the wall are next given. The city is a cube, 12,000 furlongs every way; the wall, 144 cubits high. The number 12 still governs everywhere. The cube speaks of substance, reality. The sanctuary in the tabernacle and in the temple were both cubes. This is the eternal sanctuary, and the full fruition of every hope of the saint.

The building of the wall is of jasper (or diamond). The divine glory is itself

* As Paul, too, was distinctively the apostle of the Church, through whom its unity as the body of Christ and its heavenly destiny as the Bride of Christ were revealed, we may well associate him with the city as a whole, rather than one of its foundations.—S. R.

and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall of it, a hundred and forty-four cubits, the measure of a ^aman, that is, of the angel. And the building of its wall was of ^bjasper; and the city was pure ^cgold like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with ^devery precious stone: the first foundation, jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprasus; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve ^epearls: each one of the gates was of one pearl. And the ^fstreet of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. And I saw ^gno temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty is the temple of it, and the ^hLamb. And

a cf. John 1. 18.
ctr. ch. 13. 18.
b ver. 11.
c cf. 2 Chro. 3. 8.
d cf. Ex. 28. 17-21.
ctr. Ezek. 28. 13.
cf. Is. 54. 11, 12.
e cf. Matt. 13. 45, 46.
with Eph. 5. 25.
f ch. 22. 2.
cf. ch. 3. 4.
with Gen. 5. 24.
g *ctr.* Ezek. chs. 40, 41, etc.
cf. John 4. 21-24.
h ch. 5. 6, etc.

cf. 1 Cor. 3. 16. *h* ch. 5. 6, etc.

a safeguard of the eternal city. What can touch that which God has ordained for His own praise? The city itself is pure transparent gold,—pure, permanent, radiant,—not hindering, but welcoming the enraptured sight. The foundations of the wall are adorned with every precious stone—all the attributes of God displayed in that upon which rests the salvation of the people of God. The stones, in their separate meanings, are again a mystery. The 12 gates are 12 pearls—the picture of such grace as has been shown in the Church (Matt. xiii. 45, 46). These gates stand open all the unending day. The street of the city is, again, “pure gold, like transparent glass.” The street, especially in the East, is the place of traffic, the meeting-place constantly of need and greed. But here, all circumstances, all intercourse, the whole environment, is absolute holiness and truth, fit for and permeated by the felt presence of God.

And this leads us directly to the next statement, that because the city is *all* sanctuary, there is no more any special one. The presence of God is the temple of the city: there is no other; and the Lamb is He who characterizes for us, and will always characterize, this otherwise ineffable Presence. There is no distance; there is nothing that can produce distance; there never can be more. It is that which the presence of Jesus among us—now nearly nineteen centuries since—implied and pledged to us: it is Immanu-El—“God with us”—in full reality, and in the highest and most intimate way.

It is true we have not the Father spoken of as such: it is “the Lord (or Jehovah) God Almighty,”—the God of Old-Testament revelation,—with “the Lamb,” in whom we have the revelation of the New. Nothing less, surely, is meant than God in full display, so far as the creature can ever be made to apprehend Him. There is a glory of the Light always inaccessible—not hid in darkness, but in light which no human eye can ever penetrate. None can fully know God but God. This is only to say that the creature remains the creature; but the limitation of faculties does not mean distance, as if kept back. “The Lamb” shows, on the one hand, the desire of God to be known, while implying, in the very fact of manhood taken for this revelation, that God purely as God could not be known.

Thus, it is immediately added that the glory of God lightens the city, and “the Lamb is the lamp thereof.” The lamp sustains the light. It adds nothing to it, for to divine glory nothing can be added: if anything could be, it would no longer be divine. But the light is “put upon a candlestick (or lamp) that they who enter in may see the light” (Luke viii. 16). So will Christ always be the One in whom the Father is made known: nay, the sacrificial word (“Lamb”) assures us that we shall always have need of the past also for this.

But this does not at all mean that there will not be what the Lord has assured us the angels of the little children enjoy continually: "Their angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven."

It is time now to inquire whether the measurements of the heavenly city cannot receive further developments. As already said, there is no temple in the New Jerusalem, and the reason is that it is all temple. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Over the earthly Jerusalem, in its millennial condition, the cloud of glory broods (Isa. iv. 5), and the city itself receives the name of Jehovah *Shammah*, that is, "Jehovah is there." Still the temple and the city, as we see by Ezekiel, are separate things. Here, on the other hand, they are brought together. The city is the temple, through the presence of God in it which constitutes it this. It is natural, therefore, to look at the earthly temple to see if there be not some connection between it and this heavenly one. Now, in each case we have careful measurements, in testimony that every detail is of divine appointment. And when we come to look at this measurement, we shall find some relationship between the two, which must certainly be intended for our instruction. In Revelation, the measurement is by "a golden reed," in the hands of an angel, who is also spoken of as a man; and this twofold designation of him, manifestly applies in some way to the measurement itself. "He measured the wall," we are told, "144 cubits, the measure of a man, that is of the angel." Thus it is human measure, and yet surpassing this; and when we turn to Ezekiel, we shall find what seems to explain this in a remarkable way. The one who measures is, in Ezekiel, spoken of all through as a "man;" but the measure shows a difference from mere human measurement, which is noted for us. It is human measure, for the cubit is used, which is such, but the cubit is *more than the human one*. Each cubit in it is "a cubit and an handbreadth," not the ordinary one. This has perplexed the commentators, who explain it in various and contradictory ways. The rationalistic one is that Ezekiel simply adopted the cubit of the country in which his people were now captives,—it is a Babylonian cubit, therefore, that we find here. Think of God taking this as a measure of His own things! But what does this "cubit and an handbreadth" mean? Meaning there is and must be everywhere, so that we are surely right in inquiring as to it. Such a detail is not given us without there being in it something that is to be carefully observed. The cubit, then, was the common, human measure. The handbreadth added made it more than the human. That is surely plain, and it seems to refer us at once to what we have in Revelation, where the measure is stated to be "the measure of a man," but not an ordinary man—in fact, "the measure of an angel."

Let us look at these measures further. What is the cubit? It is simply the human fore-arm, the measure taken from the elbow-tip to the end of the little finger. The cubit is in Hebrew *ammah*, which in its application to it evidently means "support." The fore-arm is that upon which one supports oneself in various positions. Now, if this be the simple, human measure, there may yet be a divine meaning in it, for God works through everything, and nothing is left without the touch of His hand. Now the measure in human hands, and as used here, is, as we may say, the measure of *accomplishment*. A man lays down by measurement the house that he is projecting for himself. But while it is thus significant of what is to be humanly accomplished, the weakness of man comes out in his very measure. He needs in every undertaking, in everything that he accomplishes, the support of Another. He does what he is permitted and enabled to do—no more. The cubit by itself is, then, strictly human. But now, if we add the handbreadth to it, this gives us plainly, according to what we have seen, what is beyond man; and if we look at the only occurrence of it elsewhere, we shall find it in the border which is made to the table of shewbread, a "border of a handbreadth round about." If the table speaks, then, of communion with God, which is the fundamental thought, the handbreadth round about it is at once the divine guard and the divine support. The full

the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon that they should shine for it; for the 'glory of God lightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the 'nations

† ver. 11.
ch. 22. 5.
cf. 1 John
1. 5.
cf. 1 Tim. 6.
cf. Is. 60. 3.

16 with John 1. 18. † cf. Isa. 2. 3, 5; cf. ch. 22. 2; cf. Is. 60. 3.

breadth of the *divine* hand it is that is round about here. Now let us apply this to the cubit in Ezekiel. If the cubit show in itself human weakness, that will not do for what is before us in the vision of the prophet. The divine hand must come manifestly in. Man may be permitted his part in the structure which the prophet sees in vision, but it must be man enabled and guarded by the divine hand which is upon him. Ezekiel in his own person shows us this hand of the Lord in its effect upon himself (chap. xl. 1). Thus the human element testifies to gracious communion on man's part, which God permits and enables for. It testifies of how near to man God is coming, and of His desire for that wonderful intimacy which, as the Lord taught His disciples, when enjoyed upon earth, was the pledge and foreshadow of that that was to be eternal (John xiv. 2).

In Revelation, therefore, the interpreting angel is still the "man"; and the measurement, as we have seen, adapts itself to this. With Christ before us, we know well that *the human measure now for God must be, nevertheless, beyond what is merely human.*

But now let us look at the measurement of the temple-city itself. If the new Jerusalem be a temple, it is yet like none other that has existed. In the temple upon earth, and in the tabernacle before it out of which it grew, there was a holy place separate from the holiest in which alone God was (and yet how little was) displayed. The holy place as separate from the holiest shows, not what is in the mind of God for eternity, but what was of necessity on account of man's present condition. He cannot unrestrictedly draw near to God. In the law, the dividing veil is shown us by the apostle to declare that the "way into the holiest was not yet manifest while the first tabernacle had its standing." That first tabernacle was but the ante-chamber to the true dwelling-place of God, and shut off from it, even in mercy to man in his present unfitness. The law could bring no one nigh. For us now, as we know, the "first tabernacle," as such, is abolished by the rending of the veil. Holy and holiest come together, and we have, blessed be God, the way made open for us into the holy places,* through the blood of Jesus.

But let us look at the figures now. The tabernacle was 30 cubits long, in breadth 10, and in height 10. The holy place was 20 cubits long, the measurements otherwise being the same; and the holiest of all was but 10 cubits long, making it a perfect cube, the breadth and the length and the height of it being equal. The city here and the holiest are in perfect agreement. In the temple, the measurements were double those of the tabernacle, but relatively similar. The whole building was 60 cubits long, 20 broad, and 20 high, of which the holy place was 40 cubits long and the holiest 20, this being again, therefore, a perfect cube, the breadth and the length and the height of it equal. How easy to recognize in this the perfect realization of God's mind only in the holiest. The cube speaks, as we see, everywhere of realization, and the number 3, which is its sign, of divine manifestation.

Let us still look at the numbers which are thus brought before us. The fundamental one is everywhere beautifully the number 5. The figures are 10s throughout, and 10 is in its meaning simply *twice* 5. But what is this number 5? Of what would it necessarily speak to us in such connections as are here? It speaks everywhere of man with God, as has been abundantly shown elsewhere. But it might be man with God as simply under divine government, and thus intimidating responsibility—a responsibility, too, which, as he has taken it, has been so often interpreted in a way fatal to himself. But of this we can have nothing here. We have come to God's accomplishment of His dwelling-

* See the notes on Heb. x. 19.

shall walk by the light of it; and the ^kkings of the earth bring their glory unto it. And its gates shall 'not be shut by day, for ^mnight there shall be none there. And they shall bring the ⁿglory and the honor of the nations unto it. And there shall 'enter into it nothing that is common, nor he that doeth abomination and falsehood: none but those ^pwritten in the Lamb's book of life. And he showed me a ^qriver of water of life,

k *cf.* Is. 5.26
-29.
l *cf.* Matt.
25. 10.
cf. Is. 60.11.
m *ch.* 22. 5.
cf. Matt. 8.
12.
n *ver.* 24.
o *cf.* *ch.* 22.
15.
p *cf.* *ch.* 20.
15.
q *cf.* Gen. 2. 10; *cf.* Ezek. 47. 1, etc.; *cf.* Zech. 14. 8; *cf.* Ps. 46. 4; *cf.* Ps. 36. 8, 9.

place amongst men, and therefore nothing but grace or glory could enter into the thought. 5 in this way we read, therefore, in Immanuel—"God with us"—certainly what tabernacle and temple, and much more the city before us, declare to us. 5 is therefore the fundamental number; that is, "God in relationship with man;" and here the number 10 only brings out still more distinctly the thought of this relationship; for almost the primary thought of the number 2 is just that of *relation*. Thus, then, the holiest itself, the very dwelling-place of God, is above all stamped with this thought, which in Christ we see accomplished, of God dwelling with man.

Now the measurement of the city, the New Jerusalem, is, as we have it in the common version, in its threefold measure, 12,000 furlongs. Here we have the 5 or 10 connected with another number which we see everywhere stamped upon the city too—the number 12: that is, the number which speaks of that perfect rule of God which is its certified and perfect blessedness. Let us dismiss for a moment the thought of the "furlong," which is human throughout, and nothing else. Furlong is "*furrow-long*," the length of the furrow which a plow makes in the field. The Greek word is *stadia*, of which, of course, the furlong is the natural enough translation, while this, however, is destitute of the thought which the word used by inspiration gives us, of something that is *stable*, *fixed*, as everything about this city is. We have come to that which stands forever, where there is not even a leaf that fades.

The 1000 is, of course, once more cubic. It is the cube of 10. If we read the whole together, the 12,000 *stadia* show us God in perfectly realized relationship with man, and therefore God of necessity in His supreme place as God: this, as the *stadia* show us, abiding. This is surely the real significance of the measurements of the one truly eternal city. The wall that guards it is 144 cubits, the real sacred cubit, as in this connection is pointed out to us, the 144 being, of course, but 12×12 , the manifest supremacy of God in strongest emphasis. This is its height and thickness, no doubt, as the wall is similarly measured in Ezekiel, though with almost infinitely smaller numbers. Its length must be such as to surround the city, plainly. The divine glory fences it round on every side, save where the gates of pearl, the beauteous image of divine grace, open a way of access and of egress to its blessed inhabitants.

This, then, is the glory of the heavenly city, in the light of which the nations of the earth themselves walk, while the kings of the earth bring their glory unto it. As another has said, "They own the heavens and the heavenly kingdom to be the source of all, and bring there the homage of their power." And "they bring the glory and honor of the nations unto it." That is, "Heaven is seen as the source of all the glory and honor of this world." The nations are, as we shall see directly, undoubtedly the millennial nations; and it is no question of these entering *themselves* into the heavenly city; their glory and honor it is they bring; and though the words in the original admit the force of "into," they by no means compel it. The mention of the continually open gates speaks indeed of peaceful and constant intercourse, and we must remember that here is the abode of those who reign with Christ over the earth. Whether *these* are the "kings of the earth" meant, is, however, a question: if it were so, the "into" might be still the true sense.

The next statement as to the city regards those who do enter therein, that is,

bright as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it and of the river, on this side and on that side, the tree of life bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his

r ch. 4. 2, 3.
s ch. 21. 21.
l Gen. 2. 9.
ch. 2. 7.
cf. John 3.
18.
u ctr. Gen. 3.
6, 7.
v cf. Zech.
14. 11.
ctr. Gen. 3.
17.
cf. Gal. 3.
1 Cor. 13. 12.

10-13. w ver. 1. x cf. ch. 7. 15; cf. John 12. 26. y Matt. 5. 8; cf. 1

have part in the blessedness which is here depicted. In opposition to all defilement, one class alone has title here: it is "they who are written in the Lamb's book of life." This surely shows that the whole of the Old Testament saints enter into the city. No one is excluded whose name is there: while, on the other hand, the millennial saints have as clearly their portion on earth—the new earth—in connection, indeed, with the "tabernacle of God," but not in it. The heavenly city remains always heavenly, and when it descends from heaven has then received its inhabitants. These distinctions, which indeed are gathered from elsewhere, are nevertheless to be kept in remembrance here, or all will be confusion.

We have next before us the "paradise of God," in which the city lies. Man's paradise of old could not yet have the city; and when the city came, it was outside of paradise altogether. Here at last the two things are united.

We are of necessity reminded also of one of the closing visions of Ezekiel, while a comparison easily shows also the difference between the earthly and the heavenly in these pictures—the one being indeed the shadow, but no more than the shadow, of the other. John here sees "a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And in Ezekiel the life-giving waters issue forth from the house of the Lord; and this is specially noted in connection with the fruit of the trees that are nourished by it: "And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine" (Ezek. xlvii. 12). How like the account in Revelation is to this, no one can fail to understand: even the language might seem to be taken from it: "In the midst of the street of it, and on this side of the river and on that, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, and yielded its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

But in Ezekiel all is distinctly earthly, and the blessing is not yet full. The waters go down into the salt sea and heal it, so that a great multitude of fish are in its waters; but there are miry places and marshes that are not healed, but given over to salt. With both the Old Testament prophet and the New we see that the earth is yet in the millennial, not the eternal, condition; for the leaves of the tree are for medicine in both alike; there is in both need of healing yet.

The waters are in both cases from the sanctuary, for that is the character of the whole city of God. In Revelation they are specifically from the throne of God; for here the one blessedness is, as we have seen, that God reigns,—God revealed in that perfect grace that is expressed in Christ,—the throne of God being also that of the Lamb. Thus the water is the type, as always in its highest meaning, of the fulness of the Spirit, the power of life and sanctification—indeed, the power of God in all creation. The tree of life bears witness, as in the earthly paradise at first, of dependence upon Another, of life in dependence; but all the plenteous and varied fruits of this could not even be symbolized in the time of old: fresh fruits and abundant; who can tell the blessed meaning? or what Christ is to those that have their life in Him?

6 (xxii. 6-16): The limiting guard.

face; and his ^aname shall be upon their foreheads. And there shall be ^ano more night, and they have no ^bneed of the light of lamp, nor light of the sun; for the ^cLord God giveth them light, and they shall ^dreign to the ages of ages.

6. And he said unto me, These words are ^afaithful and true; and the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets hath ^bsent his angel to show unto his servants things which must ^cshortly come to pass. And behold, I

z ch. 3. 12.
ch. 7. 3.
ch. 14. 1.
ctr. ch. 13. 16.
a ch. 21. 25.
b ch. 21. 23.
c f. Ps. 119.
105. 89.
d ch. 21. 11.
e cf. ch. 20. 4.
f. Rom. 8.
17.
g 2 Tim. 2.
12.

e ch. 21. 5. f ch. 1. 1. g Heb. 10. 37.

"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." Thus He is openly theirs; they too are openly His. Service is taken up afresh in glory according to the fulness of that open-eyed and open-faced communion which is here so assured. It is indeed, when it has its proper character, communion itself. The love that serves us all is the love of God Himself, and of this Christ is the perfect expression. How is it possible to be in communion with Christ without the diligent endeavor to serve Him in the gospel of His grace, and in ministry to His people? In heaven service will not for a moment cease, although some precious possibilities of the present will have passed away indeed. Would that this were more realized, with the Lord's estimate of greatness in the kingdom of which He is greatest of all!

But the Light! and our inheritance is in the light. To this the vision returns, and ends with it: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, nor light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for the ages of the ages." Thus the reign of the saints is not for the Millennium only, nor simply as partakers of the power of the rod of iron. "If by one man's offense death reigned through one, much more shall they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 17). Reigning is, for the heavenly saints, inseparable from the life they enter into in the coming day. The new Jerusalem is a city of kings and priests—the bridal city of the King of kings. Here the eternal reign seems associated necessarily with the glory in which all here live and move. For those who were once sinners,—slaves of Satan, and of the lusts by which he enthralled them, to be delivered and brought, by the priceless blood of Jesus, into such communion as is here shown with the Father and the Son,—how can their condition be expressed in language less glowing than this—needing no candle, nor light of the sun, because the Lord God giveth them light—than that they reign for ever and ever?

6. The series of visions is thus completed. What remains is the emphasizing of its authority for the soul, with all that belongs to Him whose revelation it is, and who is Himself coming speedily. Thus the angel now affirms that "these words are faithful and true:" necessarily so because of Him whose words they are. "The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets hath sent His angel to show unto His servants things which must soon come to pass." Here we return to the announcement of the first chapter. The book is, above all, a practical book. It is not for theorists, or dreamers, but for servants—words which are to be *kept*, and to have application to their service in the Church and in the world.

The things themselves were soon to come to pass. In fact, the history of the Church, as the coming epistles depict it, could be found imaged, as we see, in the condition of existing assemblies. The seeds of the future already existed, and were silently growing up, even with the growth (externally) of Christianity itself. As to the visions following the epistles, from the sixth chapter on, we have acknowledged the partial truth of what is known as the historical ful-

^hcome quickly: Blessed is he that ⁱkeepeth the words of the prophecy of this book. And I, John, [am] he that heard and saw these things; and when I heard and saw, I fell down to ^jworship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am ^kfellow-servant with thyself, and with thy brethren the prophets, and those who keep the words of this book. ^lWorship God.

And he saith unto me, ^mSeal not the words of the prophecy of this book; for the ⁿtime is at hand. He that ^odoeth unrighteously, let him do unrighteously still;

*h*vers. 12, 20.
ch. 3. 11.
i ch. 1. 3.
j ch. 19. 10.
k cf. Heb. 1.
14.
l cf. Heb. 1.6.
m cfr. ch. 10.
4.
n cf. ch. 5. 9.
o ch. 1. 3.
cf. 1 Cor. 7.
29.
p cf. Mk. 3.
29.
cf. Lk. 16.
26.

filment of these. It is admitted that there has been an anticipative fulfilment in Christian times of that which has definite application to the time of the end, although it is the last only that has been, in general, dwelt upon in these pages.

Historicalists will not be satisfied with such an admission, and, refusing on their side (as they mostly do) the general bearing of the introductory epistles upon the history of the Church at large, insist upon such affirmations as the present as entirely conclusive that the historical interpretation is the only true one. In fact, the view which has been here followed brings nearest to those in the apostles' days the things announced, as well as makes the whole book far more fruitful and important for the guidance of servants. For how many generations must they have waited before the seals and trumpets would speak to these! and when they did, how much of guidance would they furnish for practical walk? The application of Babylon the great to Romanism is fully accepted, and that of Jezebel in the same way insisted on, so that as to the errors of popery we are as *protestant* as any, even if in the "beasts" of the thirteenth chapter we find something beyond this. But nothing of this could have been intelligible to the saints of the early centuries, while the fulfilment of Ephesus, Smyrna, and even Pergamos, would soon be of the first importance.

"The Lord God of the *spirits* of the prophets"—the reading now generally admitted to be right—emphasizes for us the presence of the living God as what was for these the constant realization in all the shifting scenes of human history. And so it is for those whose spirit is in harmony with them. God in past history, God in the events happening under our eyes, His judgment therefore of everything while controlling everything for His own glory and for the blessing of His people—in this respect how blessed to be guided by those wondrous revelations! while the future, to be learnt from the same infallible teaching, is not only that which animates our hopes, but is necessary for the judgment of the present no less. All lines lead on to the full end, there where the full light gives the manifestation of all.

"And behold, I come quickly." This is for the heart: future as long as we are down here, and yet to govern the present. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book."

Here we are warned of the mistakes that may be made by the holiest of men in the most fervent occupation with heavenly things. John falls at the angel's feet to worship him; but the angel refuses it, claiming no higher title than to be a fellow-servant *with* John himself, with his brethren the prophets, and with those also who keep the words of this book. And he adds, "Worship God;"—that is, worship no creature.

Unlike Daniel's prophecies, the words of the prophecy of this book are not to be sealed up, for the time is near. To the Christian, brought face to face with the coming of the Lord, the end is always near. What time might actually elapse, is another question. In fact, some eighteen centuries have elapsed since this was written: but while Daniel was taught to look on through a vista of

and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy* still. Behold, I ^vcome quickly, and my reward is with me, to ^vrender to each one as his work is. I am the ^vAlpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are they who ^vwash their robes,† that they may have right to the tree of life, and may ^venter in by the gates into the city. "Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

7 (xxii. 16-21): Complete!

7. I Jesus have ^vsent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the ^vroot and the offspring of David, the bright and the ^vmorning star. And the ^vSpirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that ^vheareth say, Come; and let him that is ^vathirst come. He that willeth, let him ^vtake the water of life freely.

* Or, "sanctified."

† Many have, "do his commandments."

b cf. John 4. 10; cf. John 1. 12.

p vers. 7, 20.
q Matt. 16.
27.
r ch. 21. 6.
s ch. 7. 14.
cf. 1 John 1.
7. 9.
cf. ch. 2. 7.
t cfr. ch. 21.
24.
u ch. 21. 8, 27.
v ch. 1. 1.
w ch. 5. 5.
cf. Matt. 22.
41-45.
x ch. 2. 28.
cfr. Mal. 4.
2.
cf. 1 Pet. 1.
19.
y cf. Eph. 1.
13, 14.
z ver. 20.
cf. Eph. 5.
27.
a ch. 21. 6.
cf. John 7.
37.
cf. Is. 55. 1.
John 1. 12.

many generations to the end before him, Christians, taught to be always in an attitude of expectation, have before them no such necessary interval, and are brought into the full light now, though unbelief and wrong teaching may obscure it. But nothing in this way is under a veil save the moment, whose concealment is meant to encourage expectation. How good for us and fruitful, such concealment, may be measured by the goodness and fruitfulness of the expectation itself.

The solemn words are just ready to be uttered which proclaim the close of the day of grace to those who have refused grace. It is just ready to be said, "Let him that doeth unrighteously, do unrighteously still; and let the filthy make himself filthy still; and let him that is righteous, do righteously still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still." And when this applies is shown clearly in the next words, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward with Me, to render to every one as his work shall be: I, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." The last affirmation here shows the irrevocable character of this judgment. He sums up in Himself all wisdom, all power: "None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

The way of life and the way of death are now put in contrast: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Here is the condition of blessing stated according to the character of Revelation, in terms that have been used before. Our robes must be washed in the blood of the Lamb, as those of the redeemed multitude in the vision under the seals, in order to be arrayed in the white garments that are granted to the Lamb's wife. A very old corruption in this text is that exhibited in the common version, "Blessed are they that do His commandments;" but which is the true reading ought to be apparent at once. It is not by keeping commandments that any one can acquire a right to the tree of life. On the other hand, condemnation is for committing evil: "Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie."

7. Again it is repeated, "I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify these things unto you in the assemblies;" and then He declares Himself in the two relations among men in which the book has spoken of Him: "I am the root and the offspring of David"—the Jewish relation, the divine, incarnate King of Israel—"the bright and Morning Star"—the Object of expectation for the Christian.

I testify unto every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any one ^aadd to them, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any one will ^atake away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, the things written in this book. He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I ^acome quickly. ^fAmen, come, Lord Jesus! The ^ggrace of the Lord Jesus Christ* be with the saints.

c Deut. 4. 2.
Deut 12.32.
Prov. 30.6.
d cf. Gen. 3.
4 with
Gen. 2. 17.
e vers. 7, 12.
f cf. 2 Tim. 4.
8.
cf. Heb. 9.
28.
cf. 1 Thess.
1. 10.
g 2 Co. 13.
14.

* Some omit, "Christ."

But immediately He is named,—or, rather, names Himself in this way,—the heart of the Bride, moved by the Spirit, awakes: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come!" But because it is yet the day of grace, and the Bride is still open to receive accessions, it is added, "And let him that heareth say, Come!" And if one answer, "Ah, but my heart is yet unsatisfied," it is further said, "And let him that is athirst come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely."

Blessed is this testimony. The precious gifts of God are not restricted in proportion to their preciousness, but the reverse. In nature, sunlight, fresh air, the water-brooks, things the most necessary, are on that account bestowed freely upon all. And in the spiritual realm there is no barrier to the reception of the best gifts save that which the soul makes for itself. Not only so, but men are urged to come—to take—to look—with no uncertainty of result for those who do so. The stream that makes glad the city of God is poured out for the satisfaction of all who thirst and will but stoop to drink of it. This is the closing testimony of the gospel in this book; and that with which it is associated adds amazingly to its solemnity.

There is now another warning, neither to add to nor take from the words of the prophecy of this book. Scripture has many similar admonitions, but here the penalty is an unutterably solemn one. To him that adds, God shall add the plagues that are written in this book. From him who takes away, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and from the holy city. Yet men are now not scrupulous at least to take away many of the words of Scripture, and of Revelation among the rest. Every word is claimed here by the Lord Himself for God; and if this is not a claim for verbal inspiration, what is it? As manifestly the closing book of the New Testament Scripture, what may we not infer as to the verbal inspiration of other parts? And what shall be the woe of those who dare presumptuously to meddle with that which is the authoritative communication of the mind of God to man? Is it not being done? and by those who own that somewhere at least—and they cannot pretend to know exactly the limit—Scripture contains the word of God?

This announcement of penalty is Christ's own word: "He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." Is it not when His Word is being thus dealt with that we may more than ever expect Himself? When the testimony of Scripture is being invalidated and denied, is it not then that we may most expect the faithful and true Witness to testify in person? and especially when this arises in the most unlooked-for places, and Church-teachers laboriously work out a theology of unbelief?

And the promise abides as the hope of the Church, although it be true that the Bridegroom has tarried and the virgins have slept! That—true or false—a cry has been raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" is notorious. That many have stirred, and taken up the old attitude of expectancy, is also true. All these things should surely be significant also. But whatever one's head may

say,—whatever the doctrine we have received and hold as to the coming of our Lord and Master,—the *heart* of the truly faithful must surely say with the apostle here, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

It is the only response that answers to the assurance of His love on His departure to the Father: “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye may be also.”

The Lord’s coming—the *parousia*—is just the “presence” of the Lord Himself. Nothing short of this could satisfy the hearts of those who looked up after Him as He ascended with His hands spread in blessing over them, and were reassured by the angels’ voices that this same Jesus would come again. Just in proportion as we too have learnt by the Spirit the power of the love of Jesus, we too shall be satisfied with this, and with this alone. May we learn more deeply what is this cry of the Spirit and the Bride, “Amen; come, Lord Jesus!”

APPENDIX TO REVELATION.

THE HISTORICAL VIEW.

THE historical view, which we have had to some extent already before us in the Introduction, is that which applies Revelation to the Church all through, leaving out all reference to Israel altogether. Israel has been thought, perhaps, to come in in the last hallelujah (chap. xix. 6), although how it should come in there is not quite evident. It is merely the occurrence of the Old Testament expression, and in its Hebrew form. The common belief as to the Church, as one and the same throughout all dispensations, necessarily blots out Israel as such from the book of the future, and thus denies her the possession of even Old Testament promises. Those who see the distinction between these and the heavenly ones belonging to the Church may yet, of course, take the ground that this Christian Revelation applies naturally to the Church only, and some things, on a superficial view, might seem to confirm this: for instance, that the whole millennial period as presented in the prophets is passed over in Revelation by simply giving, with regard to it, its precise duration—which makes it a “millennium”—and the reign of Christ and the saints during that period. Nevertheless, this is only a superficial view. The broader interpretation shows prophecy as a connected whole, and brings its various threads together. If we are to take the Church-historical view as complete and exhaustive, then Old Testament prophecy has little indeed to do with it; while taken as it is taken here, the larger and middle portion of the book, though applying indeed to a much smaller period of time (so small as to be a great point in the minds of many against such application), nevertheless becomes much larger in scope and of much richer interest. This is contrary to the common idea, which thinks more of the lapse of time than of the importance of the events which occur in it; but it is proved by the interest, as one may say, which *Scripture* in general takes in it; and no wonder, for it is the day of manifestation, in which on the one hand God’s

dealings with man hitherto find their consummation, and thus, much of their explanation, while man's heart is told out to the full. Christ's foes are made His footstool. What importance does this give to such an application! How much interest have we, on the other hand, in the application, for instance, of the trumpets to Alaric the Goth, or Attila the Hun! No doubt there may be instruction in it all, and is; yet as a matter of comparison, who can compare these things?

Some points, no doubt, there are of very great importance, as with regard to Babylon and the beast; and these have naturally attracted proportionate attention, and brought many interpreters into an agreement conspicuously absent elsewhere, and indeed which is here only an agreement as to certain main points, while the conflict continues as to details. The conflict of interpreters has been in general, for very many, a mill-stone, consigning the whole matter to the abyss of forgetfulness; and this is not to be wondered at when we realize the limits of all such anticipative fulfilments. Limited they *must* be; for were the application complete, it would be exhaustive—there would be no room for another; while, on the contrary, the historical view leaves out the great features of the book, such as those we find in the heavenly vision of the fourth and fifth chapters.

Again, the details such as those we have referred to, regarding the earlier trumpets, could not possibly be foreseen by any amount of wisdom in prophetic study, nor would they be known even for what they are when actually passing before the eyes. Only here and there a glimmer of the truth might be seen, and this is surely what must have been intended as to them; for if capable of being read continuously beforehand, they would have put off the expectation of the Lord's coming almost indefinitely for many generations. Think, for instance, of the application in this way of the year-day theory. If any one could have seen in the uprise of the papal power something that was to last for 1260 years before the end, how thoroughly impossible would it have made it for any to be expecting the Lord for this length of time! This does not decide, indeed, as to how much truth there might be in it; but if it were true, it would have to be a truth necessarily hidden from men until the end had almost come.

We have already examined, in the Introduction, the possibility of a consistent application of this theory with all the implications which would necessarily be in it. There may be, no doubt, a partial truth in it; but it exhibits the great difficulty with the Church-historical interpretation as a whole. How much are we to take as strictly to be fulfilled? and where are we to make allowance for the necessary defects in this interpretation? Here the complete and proper fulfilment is, in fact, of great value to the historical view. It relieves it of the necessity of an absolutely consistent interpretation,—which is a burden that indeed it cannot bear,—and provides for it a stable outline with which necessarily it is to be in conformity. For example, as to the seals, the conqueror of the first seal cannot be Christ Himself in the one view and an enemy of Christ in the other. Yet the historical may, of course, and will, supply us with various mat-

ters which do not come within the range of the full and proper interpretation; as with regard, for instance, to the fall of the Christianized empire, and the papacy itself which rose upon its ruins. The woman of the seventeenth chapter is, however, and must be, on either view, the same, so that we do not need the historical interpretation in order to find depicted the development of the great "mystery of lawlessness" in Christian times. Manifestly the two views must come together at the end, if not before the end, and this we find distinctly in the seventeenth chapter.

Let us now notice once more how impossible it is to interpret the fourth and fifth chapters in any proper way according to the historical view. The vision shows us manifestly saints already in heaven, reigning, and therefore risen, seated upon their thrones around the throne of God. It is utterly impossible to apply this in the historical fashion; and that most important change by which the Lamb slain becomes before one's eyes the Lion of the tribe of Judah is equally impossible to be interpreted according to the full and right force of the terms used.

The book, according to the view before us, must be in the main the revelation of the Church's earthly history. The seals, which must be removed before the book is open, might naturally therefore have such an application to the fall of the pagan empire as is usually made. It is plain that pagan Rome must fall before the book in its main theme can be fully opened. Thus the seals are necessarily introductory, and the common view of them is thus far justified.

In the first seal, a time of conquest such as from Trajan to Marcus Aurelius actually occurred: and in this view the extension of the empire eventually helped to weaken it, and thus to prepare the way for the final catastrophe.

The second seal, in harmony with history, speaks of such civil war following as necessarily ensued from the setting up and putting down of emperors that often rose in quick succession, and by the distinct claims of different pretenders.

The third seal speaks of famine and straitness such as would naturally follow, of which one main one is noted, beginning with the Edict of Caracalla.

The fourth seal again speaks of what would be the natural result of this state of things, and is evidently a foreshadow of the approaching end, although it does not actually bring us thither.

These seals have no great difficulty in application, although they may not be, as they need not be, chronologically distinct from one another. The civil wars would not be brought to an end by the famine, nor the famine by the pestilence following. There is therefore no contradiction here.

The fifth seal brings us to another side of things, and manifestly represents the hostility to Christianity more and more developing, so that the cry of the martyrs, or their blood at any rate, went up to heaven; and the sixth seal again is the manifest answer to this, showing us the convulsions in which the pagan empire ended. This reaches to Constantine, although there is in it nothing with regard to Constantine's victory such as the plaudits of the Christian historians

might lead us to expect. Heaven views things very differently to men on earth, even oftentimes to Christian men; and the professed Christianity of the empire from this time was indeed by no means of such a nature as to be celebrated as deliverance in the sight of a holy God. Rather does it introduce us to the trumpets, which with their loud call to conflict begin now on the Christianized empire, which begins the world-history of the Church in which Church and world, alas, are so much identified.

The visions of the seventh chapter we have already seen not to have their place in the succession of events at this period, important as they are for the understanding of what is coming. Their importance has regard simply to the complete and not the anticipative fulfilment. Historical interpreters plainly break down in their attempts at application here, and necessarily so. The distinction manifest here between these two companies, the one Jewish, the other Gentile, (and these last, those who have come through the great tribulation) forbid any proper application to a time when, in the Church, Jew and Gentile, as such, exist no longer, and when the great tribulation is yet an event of the distant future.

The seventh seal, as has been elsewhere shown, contemplates the book as now open. Hence, it only introduces to us the trumpets, which, after a short interval of silence, begin to sound. Their voices announce, evidently, not peace, but strife impending, and they come as the answer once more to the prayers of the saints. If this be the history of the Church, it is not certainly one of triumphant progress, and we need not wonder if we find in them the true saints still suffering, and the new risen beast apparently, for a time, triumphant over God's witnesses upon the earth. In fact, if the woman now began to ride the beast, this could only end in catastrophe on both sides. The woman ceased thereby to be the pure woman that she should have been, and even so was a weight upon the beast's neck, which, while it remained in its inward nature unchristianized and unreformed, would only awaken the just judgment of God upon an unholy alliance. According to common consent, the first four trumpets show us judgment upon the western, as the two following show us this upon the eastern division of the now dissolving empire. We need not deny, therefore, the application of the first to the inroads of the Goths; the second, to the conquest of the Maritime Provinces of Africa and the islands by the Vandals; the third, although here less distinct, to the fierce and more quickly exhausted eruption of the Huns; or of the fourth to the time of Odoacer, by whom the name and office of Roman Emperor of the West was abolished, and "thus, of the Roman imperial sun, that third which appertained to the western empire was collapsed and shone no more." This keeps within the limits which the complete and final interpretation assigns to it, both in the part of the empire to which it applies and in the extinction of the imperial headship according to what we have already suggested—the fall of the seventh head.

From this point our attention is turned towards the East, and there is almost a consensus of interpreters in referring the fifth trumpet to the Saracenic woe.

We need not enlarge upon it, as it has been abundantly dwelt upon by others, and the application can be found in books that may be easily consulted by any who desire to do so. Similarly, the sixth trumpet no doubt refers to the Turkish woe, in which the year-day interpretation comes to the front in the prophetic year and month and day. According to this reckoning, there were 396 years, 118 days from Jan. 18, 1057, "the day when the Turcomans went forth from Bagdad on their career of victory, to the day on which the investiture of Constantinople was completed, May 16, 1453." That there are difficulties connected with this interpretation, if we are to think of it as complete and exhaustive, may, as always, be readily acknowledged; yet Barnes, in quoting from Gibbon's account, can say: "If Mr. Gibbon had designed to describe the conquests of the Turks as a fulfilment of the prediction, could he have done it in a style more clear and graphic than that which he has employed? If this had occurred in a *Christian* writer, would it not have been charged on him that he had shaped his facts to meet his notions of the meaning of the prophecy?" Here, then, the eastern empire comes to an end, as the western under the fourth trumpet; and we go on from this point to look at events of a very different character.

The interposed visions of the tenth and eleventh chapters introduce us, in natural enough order, to Reformation times. We must expect still, as ever, a certain blurring of the precise outlines, which will assure us that we are, as always with the historical view, somewhat out of focus. The angel is still Christ, who claims, in opposition to His professed vicegerent, sea and land for God; and this is confirmed by His own voice in the seven thunders. The open Bible is in the angel's hand, and this to communicate to others, as we see in the case of the prophet himself, who not only digests the contents of it, but is to prophesy again with regard to many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. Thus the reformers took up again the testimony of prophets of a day, alas, long passed, the coming of the end also not being forgotten in these announcements. Although pre-millennialism had, so far as we know, no place in the testimony of that day, yet the coming of Christ had; the Millennium either being considered to be already past, or simply being dropped out altogether. There was also such a distinction made between true and false worshipers as the measuring of the temple and altar would imply. It is as true, alas, that it was not insisted on—that in this way there was no proper separation of the Church from the world. Yet the preaching of justification by faith, and of faith itself, a living faith being a necessity to true Christianity, *did* make, more or less, such a distinction. The outer court was, however, we may say, given up to the profane for whom the established churches of the Reformation had in some way to provide, Church and nation being made, as far as profession was concerned, two aspects of the same thing. But this was only a continuance of a former state of things which, under Romanism, was of course every way worse, the assurance of salvation on the part of any, being, for the Council of Trent, the "vain confidence of the heretics." It is only by taking into account this earlier condition that the forty and two months can be made good in this connection, as undoubt-

edly, if they are 1260 years, they must begin long before the Reformation times. During this same time the two witnesses would therefore testify, God having in fact always maintained a testimony for Himself, the difficulty felt here being that this same period must end, according to this view, with the Lateran Council: "(To which all dissentients had been summoned, and at which none appeared) when, May 5, 1514, the orator of the council proclaimed to the pope from the pulpit, '*jam nemo reclamatur, nullus obsistit*'—'there is an end of resistance to the papal rule in religions. Opposers there exist no more'; and again: 'the whole body of Christendom is now seen to be subjected to its head; that is, to thee.'" However little the truth of this language could absolutely be insisted upon, yet the ability to boast in this way argues at least the appearance of truth; and it is remarkable that three years and a half after (answering to the three days and a half of the vision) Luther posted up his theses at Wittenberg, a convulsion of the nations following, and one at least of the papal kingdoms, England, escaping from this control. That this will fit all around must not be contended. There is here, as elsewhere, plenty of room to question the exactness of fulfilment which, as already said, it is vain to expect in this interpretation. There is a sufficient similitude to the truth to make us believe that these things are contemplated in the prophecy. To say that they are its absolute fulfilment, and to prove it, is simply out of the question.

In the twelfth chapter the historical interpretation seems almost of necessity to fail. It is one of those connecting visions which pertain to the framework of the prophecy, and which therefore we must not expect to fit to any partial anticipation of it. It begins, as we have seen, before Revelation itself, with the ascension of Christ, the man-child who is yet to rule the nations with an iron rod. To make the man-child caught up to the throne of God to apply to any such thing as exaltation to undisputed supremacy of a converted emperor,—if we could accept Constantine as that,—would seem rather a blasphemous perversion than an interpretation of it; nor can we think either of the triumph of orthodoxy over Arianism, although this does indeed permit Christ Himself to be seen in it.

But the sway of orthodoxy over the empire, whatever it were, comes very far short of its being caught up to God and to His throne. All this is the despair of interpretation, rather than interpretation itself; nor can the flight of the woman be made to agree with what followed such a casting down of the dragon as might be implied in this. How could the casting down of the dragon from the imperial throne force the Church to flee into the wilderness? and what sort of victory over the power of evil was it that could only produce in the end the degradation of the Church? It is plain that here the historical interpretation is coming to an end, or rather it is uniting with the real and complete one, as we see in the fallen woman of the seventeenth chapter, in which plainly we have, as has been elsewhere shown, the professing Church in its last apostate condition, but where we have to a certain extent also a glance at its past history as seen in its connection with the Roman beast, which is the empire. But then, this de-

stroys the thought of the beast being, as many take it, the papacy itself. The beast is, in its inner reality, beast all through, though it is only at the end that this is fully shown out, when it and the horns finally destroy the woman. The second beast also of the thirteenth chapter cannot be either papacy or clergy; for after the woman is destroyed, we find it as the false prophet meeting its final doom at Armageddon.

There seems nothing in the chapters intermediate, between the thirteenth and the seventeenth, which would call for attention further. The historical view, if it can be held at all, fades here into a mere shadow. On the whole, is it not evident that, as already said, God does not intend us to find in all this prophecy any continuous history of the Church at all? He has provided in it that from which His saints, especially in a time of persecution, and amid the trial of their connection with the ruin of Christendom, might derive needed and truthful comfort and guidance for themselves. They have found this, and we may surely bless Him for such rightful applications of it, which nevertheless were applications only, and which, when pressed as a complete and satisfying interpretation of the whole, fail signally, and must fail. God would not have us to stop short of that which is really in His thoughts, and in which (for us now at least) the fullest comfort and blessing may be found for the soul.



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